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Allegiances

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If you have not read Dawnstar's Trouble, I highly suggest you do so as this is the sequel series to that story. Please enjoy!

SUNCLAN

LEADER **Dawnstar-** Golden brown tabby she-cat with white markings and green eyes

DEPUTY **Cinderflame-** Dark gray she-cat with amber eyes

MEDICINE CAT **Pebblestep-** Silver and white she-cat with blue eyes

Apprentice, Honeypaw

WARRIORS *(toms and she-cats without kits)*

Crowfur- Black she-cat with amber eyes

Bramblepelt- Brown tabby tom with green eyes

Rainears- Black she-cat with white ears and blue eyes

Applespots- Calico she-cat with blue eyes

Snowtail- Long furred, white she-cat with blue eyes

Snakewhisker- Gray tom with green eyes

Apprentice, Earthpaw

Redclaw- Ginger tom with amber eyes

Apprentice, Mudpaw

Fawnheart- Light brown she-cat with lighter spots and pale green eyes

Lionclaw- Golden tom with amber eyes

Turtleblaze- Mottled brown tom with green eyes

Flamepetal- Ginger she-cat with green eyes

Heatherflight- Light brown she-cat with green eyes

Brackenpelt- Dark ginger tom with amber eyes

Cloudspots- Gray and white tom with blue eyes

Rosewind- Ginger she-cat with a white tipped tail

Cherryleaf- Calico she-cat with green eyes

Apprentice, Falconpaw

Briarrose- Small brown she-cat with amber eyes

APPRENTICES *(more than six moons old, in training to become warriors)*

Mudpaw- Brown tom with green eyes and charred ear tips

Earthpaw- Brown she-cat with white belly, paws and chest with green eyes

Falconpaw- Golden brown tabby tom with

amber eyes

Honeypaw- Golden and white she-cat with green eyes

QUEENS *(she-cats expecting or nursing kits)*

Squirreltail- Ginger she-cat with white tipped tail and green eyes, nursing Brackenpelt's kits (Larkkit, dark brown she-cat, Sorrelkit, tortoiseshell she-cat and Pikekit, dark ginger tom)

Icepetal- Pure white she-cat with blue eyes, nursing Adderstrike's kits. (Dovekit, silver tabby she-cat, Sedgekit, fluffy gray she-cat and Petalkit, gray she-cat with white ears)

Goldenleaf- Golden she-cat with green eyes, expecting Redclaw's kits.

ELDERS *(former warriors and queens, now retired)*

Sandfoot- Calico she-cat with green eyes and pale ginger paws.

ASHCLAN

LEADER **Riverstar-** Blue-gray she-cat with blue eyes

DEPUTY **Ashblaze-** Dark gray tabby tom with amber eyes

MEDICINE CAT **Skyfeather**- Pale silver tabby tom with blue eyes

Apprentice, Blackpaw

WARRIORS **Lilyclaw-** Gray tabby she-cat with green eyes

Cloverstrike- Brown tabby she-cat with a white muzzle and green eyes

Crowstep- Gray tom with black paws and amber eyes

Nightstorm- Black tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Featherfall- Silver tabby tom with blue eyes

Harewhisker- Light brown tom with amber eyes

Apprentice, Nightpaw

Petalshine- Silver and white she-cat with blue eyes

Stormheart- Gray tom with green eyes

Silvermoon- Silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Wheatwhisker- Spotted light brown tom with green eyes

Puddleclaw- Gray she-cat with green eyes

Ravensong- Black tabby she-cat with blue eyes

APPRENTICES **Nightpaw-** Black she-cat with white paws and yellow eyes

Blackpaw- Jet black tom with icy blue eyes

QUEENS **Haresong-** Light brown tabby she-cat with green eyes, nursing Grasstail's kits (Timberkit, pale brown she-cat, Dustkit, pale brown tom, Leafkit, mottled brown she-cat and Rabbitkit, brown and white she-cat)

MOONCLAN

LEADER **Shadowstar-** Dark gray tom with amber eyes

DEPUTY **Violetfur-** Dark, blue-gray she-cat with unusual blue eyes

MEDICINE CAT **Ravenheart-** Elderly black tom with white flecks on his chest and green eyes

Apprentice, Onepaw

WARRIORS **Ravenwing-** Pretty dark gray she-cat with dark blue eyes

Dovestorm- Light gray she-cat with blue eyes

Pigeonpelt- Light gray tom with yellow eyes

Feathercloud- Fluffy white she-cat with blue eyes

Shadeflower- Black and gray she-cat with amber eyes

Ebonywing- Black she-cat with white paws and yellow eyes

Swiftheart- Gray tom with green eyes

Apprentice, Rainpaw

Mosswind- Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Apprentice, Breezepaw

Icepool- White she-cat with dark blue eyes

Ashfeather- Black she-cat with blue eyes

Brokenclaw- Dark gray tabby tom with blue eyes

Apprentice, Fogpaw

Tallsong- Dark gray she-cat with light blue eyes

APPRENTICES **Onepaw-** Pale gray tabby tom with blue eyes

Fogpaw- Pale silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Rainpaw- Black she-cat with blue eyes

Breezepaw- Black and white tom with blue eyes

QUEENS **Frostfire-** White, spotted tabby she-cat with green eyes, expecting Pigeonpelt's kits

ELDERS **Brambleflight-** Dark brown tom with amber eyes

Rainypelt- Small, slender cream and brown she-cat with narrow blue eyes

LICHENCLAN

LEADER **Jaggedstar-** Red-brown tom with spiky fur, amber eyes and a crooked tail

DEPUTY **Mossleaf-** Brown she-cat with lighter marks and green eyes

MEDICINE CAT **Roseheart-** Pale ginger she-cat with darker, ginger markings and green eyes

WARRIORS **Mousethorn-** Long haired brown tom with green eyes

Twigheart- Small, light brown she-cat with green eyes

Owlheart- Brown tabby she-cat with green eyes

Flamewhisker- Ginger she-cat with green eyes

Maplepool- Golden brown and cream she-cat with green eyes

Brackenheart- Red-brown tabby tom with a light brown chest and amber eyes

Larkclaw- Brown tabby she-cat with a white tipped tail and green eyes
Apprentice, Stumppaw

Seedclaw- Black and white tom with green eyes

Owlstripe- Brown tabby tom with green eyes

Leafsong- Light brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes

Rowanwhisker- Dark, red-brown she-cat with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Flowerpaw

Timbertail- Brown tom with amber eyes

Rootscratch- Dark brown she-cat with green eyes

Foxtail- Ginger tom with a white tipped tail and green eyes

APPRENTICES **Flowerpaw-** Pale brown she-cat with green eyes

Stumppaw- Brown tom with lighter markings, a short tail and amber eyes

QUEENS **Heatherwind-** Black and white she-cat with

blue eyes, expecting Timbertail's kits

ELDERS **Shorttail-** Brown tabby tom with amber eyes and a stubbed tail

Prologue

The moon was high in the sky, with countless stars surrounding it. It shimmered above a small river, and over a group of cats. Their pelts shimmered with the same stars in their sky, their eyes full of wisdom.

"Such a beautiful night." A gray she-cat spoke, her pale green eyes watching the bright moon. "You certainly picked a wonderful spot to meet, Honeywing."

Honeywing, a shimmering golden she-cat nodded her head. "I wanted a nice place, and this is the best place I can think of." She spoke softly.

"Instead of admiring the scenery," A cream and black she-cat spoke, eyes burning with a slight annoyance. "Why don't you tell us why you told us to meet here?"

"It's not like we're going to run out of time for anything, Poppyfur." The gray she-cat purred with amusement.

"That may be, Flowerstar, but us StarClan cats have better things to do than galavant around pretty rivers." Poppyfur growled at her former leader.

"Sorry," Honeywing stepped forward, her eyes sad and a little scared. "I'll explain why I called you all here." The golden StarClan she-cat lifted her head. "I was watching over Dawnstar's kits,"

"That's what you always do." Poppyfur lashed her tail. "They aren't your kits, Honeywing, you know that right."

Honeywing flattened her ears defensively. "I do know that, but they are still my kin and it was important that I was watching over them because someone else was there."

"What do you mean? Their mother?" Flowerstar questioned, now

more focused on the former medicine cat.

"Another cat, not alive but they didn't feel like StarClan. I couldn't see them...but I could feel them." Honeywing explained, her eyes growing a bit haunted. "And when they cat stepped close; Falconkit stirred, as if he could hear the other cat or me."

"That certainly is unsettling." Flowerstar mewed. "You don't think it would be Thornstar or Falconclaw do you?"

"If it's not a StarClan cat then probably, you knew that Falconclaw visited Dawnstar a while back, he has eyes on Falconkit." Poppyfur explained. "We need to keep that rat-pelt away from those kits."

"That's not all," Honeywing spoke, Flowerstar held her gaze. "While I was looking over the kits, I heard a voice in my head." The other two she-cats looked expectantly at Honeywing, who was clearly uncomfortable. *"The choices of the brave, and the mistakes of the frightened will shape the forest with unsteady paws and claws that rain blood."*

"What does that even mean?" Flowerstar questioned, then sighed. "I figured once I got into StarClan I would understand prophecies but even now they remain a mystery to me."

"It means that trouble is coming." A new voice spoke, the three she-cats jump and unsheathed their claws as they turned to face the newcomer. It was a pretty black and silver tabby she-cat with troubled and scared eyes.

"Moonwhisker!" Poppyfur hissed. "What are you doing? Eavesdropping?" She demanded, Moonwhisker took a step back.

"This is SunClan business, Moonwhisker." Flowerstar said kindly but firmly, wanting to fend off the old AshClan medicine cat.

"No, it's not." Moonwhisker stepped closer. "First of all, we're all StarClan now, and secondly this prophecy doesn't affect just SunClan."

Honeywing, being the more welcoming of the three stepped forward curiously. "What do you mean?" She asked.

"I was watching over Crowstep's kits as well; Blackkit and his sister Nightkit. When I got the same feelings and the same message in my head." Moonwhisker explained.

"Those kits," Honeywing's green gaze faltered. "They're kin to Echoheart, right?" He questioned.

Moonwhisker tensed. "Yes, Echoheart had kits with Crowstep before the battle. They were never announced, but Echoheart fled from the battle after Thornstar died. They're not Thornstar's kits."

"Doesn't mean that Thornstar hasn't taken an interest." Flowerstar pointed out. "Echoheart and Thornstar were quite close."

"Echoheart was in love in Thornstar," Moonwhisker replied, her voice shaking. "Or she thought she was, it wouldn't be the first time she made that kind of mistake. However, Thornstar didn't want any more kits after Briarrose and Cherryleaf left him."

"Whatever may be going on, it cannot be good." Poppyfur stood up. "So what do we do?" She looked around for answers, and when no one replied she spoke again. "We do nothing, then." Honeywing, Moonwhisker and Flowerstar all gave her curious glances. "We do nothing, we don't control these kits; we let them make their own destiny just as we did for Dawnstar."

"What if things get out of control? What if they make the wrong choices?" Moonwhisker questioned with anxiety in her eyes.

Poppyfur sighed. "Then we give them guidance when they need it; but in the end their destiny is not ours to decide."

Chapter 1

The sun was bright, the sky a soft blue. Sunhigh was in it's prime and the sun shining bright over the SunClan camp. Inside the nursery sat Honeykit, her green eyes watching the clouds move through the blue sky. Her tail flicked behind her, and her ears twitched at the sounds of life in SunClan camp. At four moons old, Honeykit spent a lot of time outside of the nursery, but rarely interacting with Clan life, even if she wanted to. She was intrigued by how SunClan worked, the way Cinderflame organized patrols and how the Clan went about daily tasks.

"Sedgekit stoppit!" A tiny mew argued from inside the nursery, Honeykit looked over her shoulder and saw a pile of gray and white kits play fighting. Sedgekit, a gray she-kit with a fluffed out pelt had pinned down her sister Petalkit, whose silver and white pelt was being crushed under her larger sister. Their other sister, Dovekit watched and laughed quietly. Honeykit let out a tiny, amused sigh. Sedgekit, Dovekit and Petalkit were the daughters of Icepteal, a loving she-cat who had been in the nursery for a while now. Honeykit was glad that the nursery had been expanded since when she was first born, before the fire destroyed it.

Honeykit had vague memories of the fire, she remembered the heat and being scared. It was the same about the battle that had taken place when she was barely two moons old, she had been in MoonClan camp. Now, the nursery was large and spacious and was very comfortable, which was a good thing. Not only was Iceptal in here with her three kits, but Squirreltail had recently given birth to Larkkit, Pinekit and Sorrelkit. They weren't very active yet, they mostly just slept, and Goldenleaf had just moved into then nursery as well.

"Honeykit!" Honeykit stood up and turned to face her brother, Falconkit. Judging from his groggy amber eyes he had just woken up, he liked sleeping late. "What are you doing?" He questioned with a heavy yawn.

"Waiting for you to wake up, sleepy head." Honeykit playfully nudged her brother and bounded past him back into the nursery. Petalkit had escaped from Sedgekit but the three sisters continued playing. Honeykit looked at them and let out a purr of amusement, they were only a moon and a half but still enjoyable to be around. Petalkit was particularly nice, she was the most gentle of the three with Sedgekit acting as the fierce one, much like Falconkit. She would tease her sisters, but still showed respect to them.

"Honeykit!" Petalkit escaped the grasp of Dovekit and ran up to Honeykit. "Why do you always sit by the nursery entrance?" She questioned.

Honeykit shrugged. "I like watching the Clan." She admitted, which she did. She loved watching SunClan, she eagerly awaited the time she would become an apprentice.

"That sounds boring." Sedgekit snorted as she walked up being Petalkit, Dovekit on her tail.

"It's not." Honeykit mewed. "You'll realize once you get closer to be apprentices." She purred and playfully shoved Sedgekit.

The fluffy gray kit flicked her tail. "You're not that much older than us, Honeykit." She stood up, she was a big kit, but still not as big as Honeykit was, and definitely not as big as Falconkit who was already the size of an apprentice.

"Still older." Honeykit purred with amusement and flicked her tail over Sedgekit's ears, she hissed in response.

"And we'll be warriors first too." Falconkit mewed confidently as he strode in past the three she-kits.

"Only if you're smart enough to get past being apprentice." Sedgekit stuck her nose in the air with a sly grin, her two sisters chuckled beside her.

"Oh, I will." Falconkit puffed out his chest. "I'll be the best warrior this Clan has ever seen! The best warrior the *forest* has ever seen!"

"Only if you get over your ego." Dovekit purred with amusement.

"You're still only four moons, then you have to do all the boring apprentice duties."

"You'll have to change all the moss like Earthpaw and Mudpaw do." Petalkit added. "You'll be doing things for us here shortly." The three siblings sneered and Honeykit nudged her brother.

"Don't fight with them." She said softly. "Let's go do something."

"Please do." Squirreltail spoke quietly from the back of the nursery. "Too many kits in this nursery." She said with a twinge of annoyance.

"Sorry, Squirreltail." Honeykit dipped her head and started pushing Falconkit out of the nursery, he stumbled out into the open camp and shot a glare at her.

"Quit with the pushing." He growled before shaking his golden brown pelt free of dust. "What are we gonna do? I think our parents are out on patrol." Honeykit and Falconkit had an awkward parentage, with their mother being Clan leader. For a while, while the nursery was being built they slept in the leader's den; but then Icepetal announced she was expecting then Dawnstar decided to move back into the new nursery. Now, however she didn't spend much time in the nursery. Neither Honeykit and Falconkit minded much, she was Clan leader after all. Plus, both her and their father Lionclaw visited several times a day.

"I don't know." Honeykit shrugged. "As long as we behave I'm sure we can explore the camp all we want." She suggested, they had explored the camp once before; but under extreme supervision. Honeykit had no idea why her mother was so protective over why they couldn't explore the camp without supervision.

"Sounds like a plan to me!" Falconkit stretched his body, claws scraping the ground below. "I have an idea of where we should go first!" Honeykit tilted her head, wondering what her brother's plan might be. "We should go see the apprentice den."

Unease filled Honeykit, the apprentice den, unlike the other dens, was outside the camp in a small cave near the back entrance.

Honeykit was told that the original apprentice den had been ruined by severe rain, it was a Clan den but it was outside the camp nonetheless. "I don't know, Falconkit. Our mother was pretty strict on us staying safe inside the camp." She mewed with concern in hew mew. "Sounds like a bad idea."

Falconkit let out a groan. "Come *on,* Honeykit." He pleaded with annoyance. "We're going to be sleeping there here in two moons anyway. We're old enough, it shouldn't be that big of a deal."

Honeykit shuffled her paws. "We're only four moons, we really shouldn't--" Falconkit cut her off harshly.

"Don't be a coward, Honeykit. We've been out of the camp before; twice actually! We lived by the river for two days and then went to MoonClan camp. We're the only kits that got to leave camp before!" Falconkit explained.

"We barely even remember that," Honeykit countered. "And it's because we had no choice, kits aren't supposed to leave the camp until they're six moons unless absolutely necessary."

Falconkit groaned again. "Whatever, Honeykit." He flicked his tail with anger. "You can do whatever boring thing you want to do in camp, but I'm going to the apprentice den. Have fun." Falconkit turned and began heading towards the back of camp.

"Falconkit, wait!" Honeykit dashed after her brother, unease weighing down her paws. She didn't want him to go out alone but she also didn't want to get in trouble. The two of them stopped just before the back entrance of camp.

"You can either come with me now or stay here, Honeykit." Falconkit said sternly. "But no matter what you say, I'm going to check out the apprentice den."

"You're going to get in trouble, Falconkit." Honeykit mewed, trying to reason with him. "What if they don't let you become an apprentice."

Falconkit rolled his eyes. "Our mother is Clan leader, mousebrain."

Honeykit winced at the insult. "She wouldn't postpone our apprentice ceremony and I really don't care if I get in trouble, now are you coming with me or not?"

Honeykit looked at her brother, his eyes were serious but she didn't agree with him, even if their mother was leader she wouldn't let them get away with any special treatment. She didn't want to get in trouble, and she couldn't change Falconkit's mind so she made the right choice and took a step backwards. Falconkit shook his head. "Suit yourself!" He mewed before vanishing out of camp.

It felt as if there was a stone in the pit of Honeykit's belly, she shouldn't have abandoned her brother but she wanted to do the right thing. She lowered her head, trying to tell herself that she really was being good.

Honeykit felt a slight breeze through her fur, the breeze carried a very interesting scent. She lifted her head and looked towards where the scent was coming from. A cave in the back wall of SunClan camp, it was the medicine cat den. Honeykit perked up her ears, surely there was no harm in exploring the medicine cat den? Honeykit turned away from where she stood and padded quickly over to the entrance of the medicine den, inside she could smell the strong fragrance of herbs. The inside of the medicine was dim, and she could see some moss and bracken nests.

She also saw the figure of a she-cat, her paws pushed along some dried looking leaves. Honeykit took a step inside, swallowed her nerves and spoke. "Pebblestep?" The medicine cat turned around, they were slightly alarmed at first but quickly softened.

"Oh, hello, Honeykit." She greeted kindly. "What brings you here?" Pebblestep pushed her herbs away and approached Honeykit.

"I just wanted to see the medicine cat den." Honeykit explained, looking around. She was amazed at how big it was inside, and she enjoyed the smell of the many herbs.

"Well here it is." Pebblestep purred. "Not much to it other than some nests and herbs. I can show you where I store my herbs so no cat can find them." Honeykit nodded eagerly, she didn't know why but

she was intrigued. Pebblestep led her to a crack in one of the back corners of the den, the scent of herbs flowed strongly from the crack. "All my herbs are kept here, I sort them then I place them into the crack and if any cat wants them they will have to look for it."

Honeykit peeked into the hole where she saw stacks of leaves, flowers and berries. It was all very neat and organized. She looked up at Pebblestep, and the way the light hit the medicine cat she could see scars across her face. Honeykit heard the story of when Pebblestep was just a kit, an eagle attacked her and scarred her face pretty bad. Her ear was torn, and the eagle's talons had destroyed her sense of smell. She had learned how herbs feel and look to become a medicine cat.

"That's pretty neat." Honeykit mewed and stepped back.

"You think so?" Pebblestep questioned with a slight laugh in her mew. "Most kits would find herbs rather boring."

Honeykit shrugged. "Well I think it's interesting." She looked to the medicine cat. "My brother would think it's boring I know that for sure."

Pebblestep let out a small laugh and sit down. "I have no doubt in my mind." She purred. "So where is Falconkit?"Honeykit tensed, suddenly remembering that Falconkit was out of camp and exploring the apprentice den and StarClan knows what else. Pebblestep tilted her head, blue eyes confused and slightly concerned. "Honeykit? Is everything alright."

Honeykit looked at her paws and let out a small sigh. "Falconkit ran off to go see the apprentice den, I didn't want to get in trouble so I didn't go."

"He won't get in too much trouble as long as he just visits the den, but I'm sure his curiosity will drive him forward." Pebblestep mewed. "And you made the right choice, Honeykit there's no need to feel bad." Honeykit looked up, sympathy glowed in Pebblestep's eyes. "However, you shouldn't just abandon your brother." Honeykit flattened her ears and looked at the floor. "Don't feel bad,

Honeykit." Pebblestep stood up and brushed her tail across Honeykit's golden and white pelt. "Just come with me, we will go find Falconkit and bring him back without any trouble, alright?"

Honeykit's heart felt a bit lighter. She stood and and gave a small nod. "Alright, Pebblestep. Let's go."

Chapter 2

Falconkit left his sister behind in the camp, he didn't want his adventures to be held back by her cowardice. He marched out of camp with his held high and his chest puffed out. He breathed in the scent of the forest, ready to be away from the sickly sweet scent of the nursery, ready to hear something other than the mewing of kits and the chatter of queens. He was a SunClan warrior! His place was in the forest, not in the nursery. He had been stuck in there for long enough, and he wanted to find his place as a warrior.

Falconkit walked confidently through the forest, he knew that the apprentice den was around here somewhere, but that wasn't his actual goal. It was more of a ruse to convince Honeykit to follow him, he should've figured she wouldn't. Honeykit wouldn't dare break any the Clan's precious rules, it annoyed Falconkit to no end. He wished Sedgekit was older, she was the only fun kit in the nursery. Falconkit's didn't have any real destination in mind, just to explore this part of SunClan's territory, that way he would have a lead when he became an apprentice. He congratulated himself for being so clever.

He climbed up onto a rock and looked around, Greenleaf was at it's prime and the forest was incredible, Falconkit felt alive. He jumped down and bounded through the forest. He spotted something out of the corner of his eye and pushed his way through some foliage to see a large hollow. He assumed this was the moss hollow, Falconkit padded up to it. At the moss filled bottom was Mudpaw, Falconkit's kin. He had several piles of moss at his paws and looked very focused.

"Hey! Mudpaw!" Falconkit called, breaking Mudpaw's concentration. He looked up with a bit of annoyance written on his face, his green eyes quickly changed from annoyed to surprised when he saw Falconkit.

"Falconkit! What are you doing out here? You're not supposed to leave the camp." Mudpaw said, Falconkit rolled his eyes.

"My mother told me I could leave." Falconkit lied with a flick of his tail.

"Then where's your sister?" Mudpaw asked suspiciously.

"She didn't want to come." Now that part wasn't a lie. Honeykit really didn't want to come with him.

Mudpaw shook his head. "Yeah, right." He looked up, his green gaze growing stern. "You need to go back to camp before you get in trouble."

Falconkit sighed heavily. "I'm fine, I'm not that far from camp." *Yet.* He added silently. "Stop being so boring."

"Go back to camp, Falconkit." Mudpaw's voice turned into a bit of a snarl. "I will drag you back there myself if I have to."

"You're not the boss of me." Falconkit puffed out his chest. "You're only an apprentice!"

"And you're only a kit!" Mudpaw spat. "You have to listen to me, and if you don't then I'll go get your father."

Falconkit laughed. "My father is the bravest warrior in all of SunClan, he would be proud of me for being so courageous." Falconkit knew that he was just as brave his father, if not braver!

"You're not being courageous, you're being stupid." Mudpaw said bluntly. "Just go back to camp before you get in trouble, if you go back now I won't tell anyone you left."

Falconkit stretched. "Or..." He mewed smoothly. "You could escort me around the territory."

"Then I'd get in trouble for taking a kit out of the camp, and I have my apprentice duties to attend to."

"You mean picking grass?" Falconkit snorted.

"This is going into your nest, you arrogant furball, and if you don't want any thorns in it I suggest you go back now." Mudpaw's

irritation was visibly growing, Falconkit found himself amused by it.

"Then you'd get in trouble for being such a horrible apprentice. What if it ended up hurting poor Honeykit?" Falconkit sneered.

"Go. To. Camp!" Mudpaw's voice raised substantially.

"Hmmm..." Falconkit falsely pondered. "No. You can't tell me what to do, I'm the leader's son." Mudpaw lashed his tail. "So if you want me to go back to camp...you'll have to come get me!" Falconkit turned and bounded away, he could hear Mudpaw angrily shouting his name as he vanished into the forest. His paws pounded against the forest floor as he ran through the trees, rustling flora and kicking up rocks. His heart pounded in his chest, he felt so alive! Like a true warrior!

Falconkit ran for a long time, he could hear Mudpaw from time to time, but he knew that the apprentice would never catch him, he might as well be the fastest cat in the forest! He inhaled the scent of the forest, it engulfed him and made him feel strong. After a while, Falconkit reached an open field with a large rock formation in the distance. His legs were sore and his breathing was heavy, but he still felt like lightning was crackling in his veins. He couldn't hear or see Mudpaw, so he confidently stepped forward towards the rocks.

"Falconkit, stop!" Falconkit stopped dead in his tracks and turned to see, much to his annoyance, Mudpaw. How had he caught up?

"I'm not listening to you!" Falconkit took another step forward and turned his head towards the rocks but never finished his step as he saw something thin, slithering near his feet. Falconkit's heart turned to ice as he stared at what was below him. He realized where he was now, he was at Jagged Rocks, which was filled with adders in Greenleaf. Adders were incredibly deadly, and Falconkit realized the danger he was in.

"Don't move." He heard a hushed voice in his ear, Mudpaw had somehow crept forward without making a sound. Falconkit's heart was bounding his chest, he was suddenly scared and ready to listen to Mudpaw. "I'm going to grab you, just be still." Falconkit nodded

ever so slightly, but he was starting to lose his balance. He dug his claws into the ground to try and steady himself, and keep himself upright. It felt like a million moons waiting for Mudpaw, and he truly thought he was going to die.

The world went from frozen solid to as fast as lightning as Falconkit felt teeth in the scruff of his neck and was hurled forward. Falconkit did a somersault forward, hitting his head on a rock. He looked over his shoulder and saw Mudpaw leaping after him. "Move!' He shouted. Falconkit scrambled to his paws and they both ran away from the adder. They reached the forest and Falconkit stopped, tripping over his paws and panting heavily. Mudpaw also stopped, panting. "You didn't get bit did you?" His eyes were filled with concern.

"No, I didn't." Falconkit looked over his body.

"You mousebrain!" Mudpaw shouted. "What did I tell you?" Falconkit winced and stepped backed. "You could've gotten yourself killed if not both of us!"

Falconkit hissed. "How was I supposed to know there would be adders?" He lashed his tail.

"If you were an apprentice you would know! Every single SunClan warrior knows that Jagged Rocks is dangerous! Especially in Greenleaf! Small cats could fall and break their necks, it's right next to the AshClan border, and there are adders! Not even apprentices are allowed to go without a warrior escort!"

Falconkit flattened himself against the ground. "Well why don't the kits know?"

"Because kits aren't supposed to leave camp!" Mudpaw trembled with anger, his eyes were a green blaze. He stopped and took a breath. "You're going back to camp, now."

"You can't make me!" Falconkit spat, no longer scared but annoyed.

"Yes, I can." Falconkit was lifted off the ground as Mudpaw grabbed his scruff.

"Hey! Put me down!" Falconkit struggled in his teeth but Mudpaw bit down harder. "Ow!" Falconkit hissed. Mudpaw started walking, but Falconkit's hind paws dragged on the ground, he struggled for a while but eventually gave up. They neared camp and humiliation swarmed Falconkit, his pelt burning as hot as the sun.

The camp's back entrance was in sight but so was Honeykit along with the SunClan medicine cat, Pebblestep. Mudpaw dropped Falconkit and pushed him forward with his paw, Falconkit had no choice but to go forward. He sulked near the ground, ears flat against his head and avoid making eye contact with anyone.

"Mudpaw." Pebblestep approached Mudpaw with Honeykit close to her. "You found him? Where was he?" He could feel both Pebblestep's and his sister's gaze on his pelt, he ignored them.

"I'd rather tell his parents personally, it's a story they need hear." Mudpaw growled, Falconkit wished he could just disappear into the floor.

"Very well, let's go wait in Dawnstar's den." Pebblestep turned and they all headed back to camp, Falconkit could hear Honeykit and Pebblestep talking to each other. When did they become so close? He let out a low growl and followed them reluctantly. They reached the leader's den where Falconkit sat near the entrance, he hunched himself up to avoid any conversation, but it didn't work.

Honeykit walked to him. "Are you alright?" She asked quietly. Falconkit turned his back on her, avoiding any conversation with her completely.

"Don't be rude to your sister because you acted like a mousebrain, at least she had the intelligence to stay in camp." Mudpaw scolded him.

Anger bubbled up inside Falconkit, he jumped to his paws and spun to face Mudpaw. "Yes because Honeykit is so very special!" Honeykit winced and stepped back.

"What's going on?" Falconkit stiffened when he heard the voice of his mother. He dropped his aggressive stance and sat back down.

He noticed Mudpaw standing up to talk to Dawnstar.

"Falconkit left camp and came to the Moss Hollow, I told him to turn back but he didn't listen, then he ran off towards Jagged Rocks and came face-to-face with an adder. I was able to grab him and get him away before anything bad could happen, however." Mudpaw explained, Falconkit's claws scraped the ground.

"Is this true, Falconkit?" He could feel his mothers' fierce green eyes burning into him, he forced himself to meet her gaze.

"Y-Yes...I didn't know I would run into an adder." He forced out the words, his chest tightening.

"You never should've left camp." Dawnstar said firmly, then turned to Honeykit. "Were you with him?"

No, she's the perfect kit, why would she ever break the rules? Falconkit thought bitterly.

"No, she was with me." Pebblestep said. "She told me that Falconkit left and we wanted to find him, then we ran into him and Mudpaw."

"I see." Dawnstar nodded. "Pebblestep, would you mind watching Honeykit for a bit longer? I would like to talk to Falconkit alone, please." Falconkit clenched his jaw, his claws working harder against the ground. "Mudpaw, you can return to your duties. Thank you so much for helping Falconkit, he's thankful too."

No I'm not. Falconkit grumbled, right now he wished the adder really had bitten him.

"Falconkit." Dawnstar said, nudging him into the den, he reluctantly went inside the dim den then sat in the moss. "Why did you think it was okay to leave the camp."

Falconkit looked up, now that Mudpaw and Honeykit were gone, he felt a bit more comfortable talking to his mother. "I've left the camp before, and I'm almost an apprentice. I wanted to see the forest again."

Dawnstar sighed softly then sat down. "Falconkit, the only reason you've left the camp before is because you had to. Had Icepetal's or Squirreltail's kits been born at the time, they would've left too. That doesn't give you the right to go where you please, and neither does you being the kit of a leader. You're no more special than Sedgekit or Larkkit." Falconkit flattened his ears. Dawnstar wrapped her tail around him. "Falconkit, If I would've lost you...I don't know what I'd do. You and Honeykit are my entire world. If Mudpaw wouldn't have been there you would've died. Then you'd never even get to be a warrior, you would be a kit forever." Dawnstar looked up, her eyes reflecting something sad. "I was going to wait until you were older to tell you about Willowkit, but I think now is a good a time as any."

"Willowkit?" Falconkit echoed. "Who's Willowkit?" He couldn't ever recall hearing the name Willowkit before.

"Willowkit was my sister." Dawnstar said, her voice growing low and sad.

"You had a sister? I thought your only sibling was Turtleblaze." Falconkit's ears were slightly perked back up.

"Yes, I had a sister. She was very bold and headstrong. When we left the nursery, we were only three moons old, she ate deathberries in camp and died." Falconkit's heart dropped. "She wanted to be leader more than anything, but she never made it. Our parents were torn apart, and Turtleblaze and I blamed ourselves for moons, especially me." Falconkit stared at his paws, wondering what would've happened if he died. "And that was inside of camp, there are many more dangers in the forest, that's why kits aren't allowed to leave. It's dangerous and we love all of our kits."

Falconkit didn't respond, he didn't know how to respond. "Everyone tells me that you have your father's personality," Her mew rose to a slight purr. "But I honestly think you have Willowkit's personality. She didn't understand the difference between bravery and recklessness, neither do you. Bravery is fighting in battle along side your fellow warriors, recklessness is taking on more enemies than you can handle and endangering your fellow warriors." She looked down. "Do you think you were being brave or reckless?"

Falconkit looked down. "Reckless." He said quietly with a small twitch of his tail, then he looked up. "Are you going to stop me from being an apprentice?"

Dawnstar chuckled ."No, but you are confined to the nursery for a while." Falconkit sighed heavily. "Don't be so down, you've only got two moons left before you become an apprentice, and I know you'll be a wonderful warrior. She brushed her tail over his back." Her words made him feel marginally better, he stood up and looked at his mother.

"Can I go back to the nursery, now?" Falconkit asked.

"Yes, and please grab your sister from Pebblestep as well." Dawnstar instructed, Falconkit's ears went down again. He really didn't want to see Honeykit.

"Yeah, sure." Dragging his tail behind him, Falconkit left the leader's den and headed towards the medicine cat den. Inside Honeykit was still with Pebblestep, her green eyes were bright and wide as she talked to Pebblestep. Falconkit twitched his ears then coughed to get their attention. Honeykit turned to look at him, her gaze soft. "Oh, hi there Falconkit."

"We need to go back to the nursery." He said, his voice dry. "Let's go."

"Alright." Honeykit didn't argue, she stood up and looked up at Pebblestep. "Thank you for teaching me all of that!"

Pebblestep purred. "No problem, if you wanna know more feel free to come on back anytime you want."

"Thanks!" Honeykit purred then bounded to Falconkit's side. "Ready when you are." Falconkit withheld a heavy groan then began stalking away from the medicine cat den. "So what did Dawnstar say about what you did?"

Falconkit avoided his sister's gaze. "She told me in confined to the nursery for awhile." He flicked his tail.

"Oh, I'm sorry." He wasn't sure if Honeykit sensed how hostile he

was feeling, but she stayed quiet until they reached the nursery. Without speaking to Sedgekit or any of the other kits in the nursery he fell into the nest, wishing to forget the day.

Chapter 3

Honeykit woke up a bit later than she usually did, the sun was already high in the sky and normally she was up at dawn. She stood up and stretched, Falconkit was also still sleeping but Sedgekit and her siblings were hard at play outside the nursery. Honeykit sat up, flicking her ears and sniffing the air. She looked around the nursery, Sedgekit, Dovekit and Petalkit were gone and Larkkit, Pikekit and Sorrelkit were wrestling quietly in the corner. Goldenleaf was sleeping soundly, she would be having her kits here soon, Pebblestep told her it would be in the next moon. Honeykit wondered if she they would be born before she became an apprentice.

Honeykit rose from her nest and padded to the entrance of the nursery, looking into the camp. Sandfoot and Applespots were relaxing together outside of the elder's den sharing tounges. Honeykit barely remembered Hawktalon and Nightwing, she knew that Hawktalon died defending her and all the other kits during the battle and Nightwing died about a moon later. They were mates in the elder's den and now it was just Sandfoot in the elders den. Honeykit looked around some more, she saw Earthpaw talking with Turtleblaze, her green eyes glowing. Honeykit wondered what she was talking about.

Her eyes traveled over to Pebblestep's den where the silver and white she-cat was emerging from her den with a mouthful of moss. Honeykit perked her ears up and stepped out of the nursery, Petalkit looked up from her battle with her siblings. "Hey, where ya going?" She questioned, Dovekit and Sedgekit were also looking up at this point.

Honeykit looked over at Pebblestep who had reached the elders den. "Oh, I'm going to see Pebblestep."

"Is something wrong? Are you sick?" Dovekit tilted her head, confusion in her eyes.

Honeykit shook her head. "No, I've just been hanging out with her lately. She's very interesting to hang out with."

Sedgekit laughed. "Really? Are you gonna become a medicine cat or something?" She questioned. Honeykit looked at her paws, but felt good. She had considered it, she really liked learning about herbs.

Honeykit shrugged. "I'm not sure, I've thought about it though."

"Sounds boring." Sedgekit licked her paw. "I wanna be a warrior! I'll be the best fighter in the Clan!"

"I want to be a warrior too!" Dovekit announced and Petalkit nodded in agreement.

"But you do whatever you want" Petalkit purred. Honeykit nodded then bounded over to Pebblestep who was now in the elder's den.

"Hey there, Honeykit." Sandfoot greeted with a gentle purr, Applespots also looked up at her. "Something you need? How are you?"

"No, I just came to see Pebblestep, actually." Honeykit mewed, looking into the den. "What's she doing?"

"Just giving us some new moss." Sandfoot replied. "Are you interesting in becoming a medicine cat?" Honeykit's tail twitched.

"Kind of, I've considered it." Honeykit replied.

"How interesting." Sandfoot purred. "You're following the same path as Honeywing."

"Honeywing?" Honeykit tilted her head, she remembered hearing that name once or twice but couldn't place it right now.

"Honeywing is your kin, she was the sister of Lionclaw's mother. She was SunClan's medicine cat before Pebblestep's mentor. She was highly regarded as one of the best medicine cats in the forest. You were named after her." Sandfoot explained.

"Really?" Honeykit pondered for a moment. She didn't know she

was named after anyone, let alone a renowned medicine cat. "Is Falconkit named after anyone?"

Applespots and Sandfoot shared an awkward glance. "Y-Yes, Falconkit is named after Falconclaw, a former warrior, he's related to your father." Neither of them said anything further, Honeykit felt a bit awkward. Luckily, Pebblestep exited the elder's den.

"Oh, hello Honeykit. How are you?" She questioned, sweeping away old moss with her paws.

"I'm good!" Honeykit replied, forgetting her conversation with Sandfoot and Applespots.

"Want to come back to my den with me? I collected some new herbs this morning." Pebblestep suggested, Honeykit felt her heart get lighter.

"Yes, please!" Honeykit jumped to Pebblestep's side, excitement tingling in her paws.

"You two enjoy the new nests!" Pebblestep called to Sandfoot and Rustpelt as she and Honeykit left the elder's den.

"So, how's your brother been? He still confined to nursery?" Pebblestep asked as they neared the medicine cat den.

"I think so, but I don't think it will be for much longer." Honeykit responded, thinking of Falconkit, she lowered her head. "I don't think he likes me very much."

"Nonsense." Pebblestep flicked her tail over Honeykit's ears. "You're his sister, he will always love you. I'm sure he's just bitter because he got in trouble and is being punished. I used to fight with my siblings all the time, I'm sure when you're apprentices everything will be better." Honeykit hoped so, she didn't want to fight with Falconkit forever. Sedgekit and her siblings were so close, as well as Pikekit and his littermates.

They reached the medicine cat den and Honeykit let the familiar scent of herbs surround her, she looked around the den. It had become a very familiar place to her, and she enjoyed it every time

she came here. "So what are the new herbs you gathered?" Honeykit asked, eager to learn more.

Pebblestep purred with amusement. "Well today I was lucky to find more borage leaves. I haven't needed any, but I will." She grabbed a pile of fuzzy looking leaves. I use these leaves to help nursing queens bring milk to their kits. None of the queens are nursing anymore, but Goldenleaf will need them when she gives birth." Honeykit sniffed the leaves, the fuzz tickled her nose. "And this--" She set down a set of yellow, soft flowers. "Is Coltsfoot, I use it for coughs, which isn't much an issue now but it can also help soothe cracked pads." Honeykit watched in awe as Pebblestep showed her more and more herbs, including small flowers named feverfew, used to cure fevers and juniper berries to help breathing and bellyaches. Honeykit gave each herb a sniff, trying to remember them.

"Pebblestep!" A loud, terrified cry rang out from outside the den causing Honeykit to jump. Pebblestep stopped what she was doing and bounded out of her den, Honeykit followed quickly behind her. Adderstrike's eyes were wide and scared, leaning on him was Heatherflight with blood dripping down from her foreleg, staining her fur bright red. Honeykit gasped and stepped back.

"What happened?" Pebblestep demanded as she rushed to Heatherflight, sniffing her wound. "What did this?"

"AshClan." Adderstrike mewed franticly. "They attacked our patrol for no reason and they're coming to the camp! My patrol is trying to hold them off but they've got the whole Clan!"

"AshClan is invading?" Cinderflame questioned, running from Dawnstar's den, Honeykit's mother followed closed. Adderstrike nodded.

Pebblestep shifted Heatherflight from Adderstrike to her own shoulder. "I need to take care of her."

By now, all of SunClan had gathered around Adderstrike while Honeykit stayed at the medicine cat den entrance. "We need to get the kits and elders to the moss hollow as soon as possible." Dawnstar said. "Mudpaw, Redclaw!" She called to Mudpaw and his

mentor, they turned to her. "Take the queens, kits and elders to the moss hollow now." Redclaw nodded and ran to the elders den while Mudpaw went to the nursery. "Go with them Honeykit."

Honeykit nodded, her heart pounding in her chest but Pebblestep stopped her. "Honeykit should stay with me." Honeykit flattened her ears.

"What? Are you crazy, Pebblestep?" Dawnstar's eyes sparked, she didn't seem angry however. "She's just a kit."

"Adderstrike's initial patrol is going to be injured, it's going to be too much for me alone. Honeykit has some knowledge of herbs and she can help grab herbs for me." Honeykit stared at Pebblestep who stood firm. "If they get into the medicine den, I have a place for her to hide and the warrior code forbids them to hurt a kit."

Dawnstar looked down at Honeykit, she could see the fear and love in her mother's eyes, she closed them and sighed. "Very well, Honeykit can stay with you. Just protect her, okay?"

"With my life, Dawnstar." Pebblestep nodded, her eyes strong and bright. She turned to look at Honeykit. "Follow me." She continued leading Heatherflight into the medicine cat den and laid her down, exposing her wound. Blood poured from a wound in her shoulder, Honeykit stared in horror. "Honeykit, I need you to grab me cobwebs and marigold, do you remember what they look like?"

Honeykit's mind raced, she pictured the golden flowers and wispy material. "Yes!" Honeykit skidded across the floor to the herb store. Her eyes scanned the herb stock for each herb, she grabbed a mouth full of marigold first and ran it to Pebblestep, then turned and returned with the cobweb. Honeykit watched as Pebblestep chewed the marigold into a pulp and rubbed it on her wound. "I need some moss, I keep it in the back of the den, it should already be moist."

Honeykit dipped her head and ran towards the back of the den, outside she could hear the faint yowling and hissing of cats, she tensed up but grabbed the moss and returned it to Pebblestep. Watching Pebblestep work was interesting, the way she cleaned and wrapped the herb. "You stay still, alright Heatherflight?" Pebblestep

mewed calmly to the wounded she-cat, Honeykit noticed the slight nod of Heatherflight's head.

"There's bound to be more coming in soon, if anything bad happens and AshClan warriors come into here I want you to hide in the very back, there's a crack in the wall where you can hide, alright?" Honeykit nodded, watching the entrance in fear that an AshClan warrior would come tearing through any second. "Honeykit." Pebblestep's voice was calm, yet stern, Honeykit looked up at her, trying to hide her fear. "It's alright to be scared, but I need your help, but if it gets to be too much for you, I'll take you to the moss hollow where you'll be safer, okay?"

Honeykit nodded. "I want to stay and help." She mewed, she was scared but she wanted more than anything to help out. Pebblestep dipped her head then walked towards the entrance, Honeykit stayed back but peered outside. AshClan had reached the camp, Honeykit watched in horror as the two clans fought ferociously. She spotted Lionclaw battling a large gray tom-cat, Honeykit looked away.

"Riverstar!" Honeykit heard her mother's yowl. "Why are you doing this? Why are you attacking our camp?"

"The borders were becoming relaxed, I had to make a point." A mysterious she-cat spoke, Honeykit assumed it was Riverstar. "We've had peace since the battle passed, but it's time to take a stand. AshClan will be defending its borders once again, the time of peace is over!"

"Then announce it at a Gathering! Don't risk the lives of both of our warriors for your own ego!" Dawnstar hissed.

"This way you understand, that all of SunClan understands!" Riverstar yowled back. Honeykit's attention was pulled away from the conversation when another cat entered the medicine cat den, it was Snowtail, her white fur stained crimson. It seemed to be coming from her left ear. Pebblestep helped her into the den. Before Pebblestep asked, Honeykit retrieved the herbs she got the first time, Pebblestep nodded and began treating Snowtail's ear. Honeykit watched for a moment, then turned her gaze to outside the den once again. She could hear and see the intense fighting, she

flattened her ears and looked back at Pebblestep who seemed to finish working on Snowtail.

"Honeykit, I'm going to go outside and see if I can find anymore wounded cats, stay here and stay safe near Snowtail, she can still fight if need be." Pebblestep demanded, Honeykit nodded and the medicine cat vanished into the battle. Honeykit flattened herself against the floor. Her heart was racing her chest, what if Pebblestep got injured? What happened if the medicine cat got hurt? What would they do? Honeykit couldn't treat the Clan! She was just a kit who learned a little bit about herbs!

"Don't be scared, Honeykit." Snowtail rested her tail on Honeykit's back. "It will be alright, SunClan is strong." Honeykit nodded and stared at her paws, she didn't want to think about the battle. She just wanted it to be over!

Chapter 4

Falconkit woke up to the sun shining in his face, he lifted his head and noticed that Honeykit was already gone. He sighed, she probably went off to Pebblestep's once again. He wasn't sure what her obsession with the medicine cat den was, but he really didn't care. He sat up and stretched out, his claws digging into his moss nest.

"Hey, you're up!" Sorrelkit mewed. "Wanna play with us?" She asked with a flick of her tail, her amber eyes sparkling.

Falconkit's ears twitched. "Maybe in a bit." He really didn't feel like playing kits half his size. He was five moons, they were only three moons and all of them except Pikekit were pretty small. They were even smaller than Sedgekit who was only two moons, but they were just barely a moon younger than Pikekit and his siblings, they would probably become apprentices at around the same time, but not before Falconkit. In just one more moon he would be an apprentice, finally starting his warrior training.

A moon had passed since he ran out of camp, and he was still confined to the nursery. He could go just outside the den, but not unless one of the queens were watching. He hated it, the younger kits had more freedom than him. If only stupid Mudpaw wouldn't have found him, he wouldn't be in this situation. Falconkit huffed and flattened his ears, even thinking about it annoyed him.

He moved to the front of the den and saw Sedgekit, Petalkit and Dovekit playing with each other, they stopped when they saw him. "Look who's up!" Sedgekit purred and bounced over to him.

"Hi." Falconkit stepped back as she got close to him.

"So did you know your sister is gonna be the next medicine cat!" Dovekit announced, Falconkit glared at her.

"That's stupid, why would Honeykit want to become a medicine

cat? Being a medicine cat is boring." Falconkit lifted his nose into the air.

"Have you ever been a medicine cat?" Petalkit asked with a flick of her tail.

"No, and I never will be?" Falconkit growled.

"Calm down." Dovekit laughed. "We understand, but Honeykit said she wants to be a medicine cat."

"She said she thought about it." Petalkit corrected her. "Because she's been going to hang out with Pebblestep so much."

Falconkit guessed that made sense, but when they were younger they talked about doing everything together, such as training and battling. Why would she change her mind? Then again she cowered out of leaving the camp with him, why should he care if she wanted to be a medicine cat?

"Whatever," Falconkit looked past them as he heard someone shout. He saw Adderstrike with a cat leaning on him, it looked like Heatherflight from here. He was facing Pebblestep and Honeykit was poking her head out from the medicine cat den. To his surprise he could see blood on Heatherflight, what had happened? Cinderflame and his mother ran up to the cats as well, and most of SunClan was now looking at them. Adderstrike looked scared, and the rest of the cats hearing the conversation looked concerned.

"What's going on over there?" Falconkit heard a mew behind him as Larkkit and his siblings exited the den to stand beside the rest of the kits.

"I don't know," Sedgekit responded. "But it looks like Heatherflight is bleeding!" Petalkit and Dovekit shared a scared glance.

"Was she attacked?"

"Was it another Clan?"

Falconkit watched as Pebblestep took Heatherflight from Adderstrike, and Dawnstar said something to Mudpaw and Redclaw

before they ran off in separate directions. Mudpaw seemed to be coming to the nursery, Falconkit flattened his ears. "What's going on, Mudpaw?" Sedgekit asked as he neared.

"AshClan is invading." He replied, Falconkit looked at him in surprise. AshClan was invading?

"Invading?" Squirrletail poked her head out of the nursery, Icepetal and Goldenleaf looked as well.

Mudpaw nodded. "Yes, we need to get kits and elders to the moss hollow as soon as possible."

"I wanna stay and fight." Falconkit stepped forward, extending his claws. "I'm almost an apprentice.

"Almost isn't an apprentice, I won't even be fighting. Don't cause me any problems, Falconkit." Mudpaw growled. "Let's go now." Icepetal and Squirreltail rounded up their kits and got ready to leave, Falconkit stood his ground. "Falconkit!" Mudpaw spat. "Come with me now, we don't have time for this."

"Just come on, Falconkit." Sedgekit said. "We'll need you to protect us in the moss hollow!" Falconkit knew she was lying, but it did make him feel a little better. He groaned and joined the rest of the group. They met up with Redclaw and the elders and headed for the back of camp, Falconkit felt confident they knew where they were going, but then he noticed something.

"Where is Honeykit?" He questioned, wondering the whereabouts of his sister.

"Pebblestep wants her help treating wounded cats, she's staying in the medicne cat." Mudpaw explained, Falconkit stopped in his tracks.

"What? She gets to help in the battle but I don't? How is that fair?" Mudpaw sighed heavily and turned around to face Falconkit. "She's not fighting, she's just staying inside the medicine cat den, just *come on*!"

Falconkit looked towards the medicine cat den, he couldn't see

Honeykit but he felt anger bubbling up inside him. What made her so special? She wasn't a medicine cat! She was just as old as Falconkit! Falconkit's gaze was pulled away as Mudpaw lifted him off the ground once again, this time he was even bigger. "Knock it off!" Falconkit hissed.

"I'm sick of your attitude, Falconkit!" Mudpaw said through his teeth and continued walking. Falconkit could feel the other kits staring at him, but he looked away. He hated all of this! Why couldn't he fight and why could Honeykit stay inside the camp while he was being dragging away like a half-brained mouse?

Mudpaw didn't set him down until they reached the moss hollow, where he landed with his claws digging into the moss. "Now stay here." Mudpaw growled. "I'll be watching you, so don't try anything mousebrained."

"Don't call me a mousebrain!" Falconkit spat and sat down at the edge of the wall, lowering his head. The rest of the cats got settled and began quietly talking, Falconkit could hear all the other kits talking about the battle but it just got under his pelt in the worst way. He clawed at the moss, making piles of it at his paws. After what seemed like an eternity, he noticed that Mudpaw wasn't looking at him; he was talking with Redclaw and both their backs were turned. Sandfoot and Rustpelt were also deep in conversation about the battle and the kits weren't paying attention. He looked around the moss hollow, not far from him was a shorter wall covered in moss. If he could be quiet...he could probably get out and claim his place in the battle!

Falconkit slowly moved to the wall and looked up him, looking over his shoulder one last time to make sure no one was watching him, he dug his claws into the moss. Using all the strength he could muster, Falconkit scaled the stone wall. His heart was pounding so loud he swore the others could hear it, but no one stopped him. He reached the top and heaved himself over the top. Falconkit stood up catching his breath, his claws were sore but ready for battle. Without hesitating he ran towards the camp, his blood buzzing with the excitement of his escape.

Falconkit could hear yowling and hissing as he neared the camp, he

was ready to fight! He was so close when he bowled over. Falconkit let out a gasp of pain as he felt something sharp dig into his pelt. He slipped away and faced his attacker, it was a white and black and she-cat, she was smaller than a warrior, he assumed she was an apprentice. His first battle!

"Oh," She snickered. "You must be the smallest apprentice I've ever seen! You sure you don't belong in the nursery?"

Falconkit dug his claws into the ground. "I could still win against you!" He spat, the she-cat didn't hesitate as she tackled him once more. Falconkit attempted to strike her, but his paws flailed awkwardly. He finally felt his claws hit fur and draw blood, the she-cat hissed and slashed at his face, he stumbled back pain burning at his nose. Falconkit attempted to open his eyes but blood dripped into his eyes, he winced. He knew he had made a mistake, could he run? No! A warrior never ran!

"Falconkit!" Falconkit heard a deep voice call his name, it was the voice of his father. Falconkit tense up and cowered near the forest floor.

"Kit? You're a kit?" He heard the AshClan apprentice said quizzically. Falconkit heard the pawsteps of his father. "I-I didn't know he was a kit! He fought back!"

"Leave!" Lionclaw shouted, Falconkit heard the she-cat scurry away back towards her Clan. Falconkit felt his father get closer. "Falconkit, are you okay? What are you doing out here?" Lionclaw's tongue rasped over his face, clearing the blood away from his eyes, but his nose still stung. "You're supposed to be in the moss hollow with the others."

"I-I wanted to fight!" Falconkit stood up to face his father, trying to be brave.

"You can't fight! You're only five moons old! You haven't had any training!" Lionclaw's eyes blazed hotter than the sun with pure anger. "You could've gotten yourself killed!" Falconkit flattened himself against the forest floor, he truly felt like a kit now. "Don't you ever, *ever* do anything like this again! Go back to the moss

hollow, right now! We will talk about this later, just go be safe and do not leave again!" Falconkit listened, he slowly crept back towards the moss hollow. Humiliation burned at his pelt, his nose hurt and now so did his spirit.

Before he reached the moss hollow he ran into Redclaw, who appeared to be frantic. "Falconkit! There you are! You had us all worried sick!" Falconkit said nothing, he just stared at his paws, ears down. "Come back to the moss hollow." Redclaw led him back to the hollow, and Falconkit followed silently.

"There you are!" Mudpaw called. "I knew I should've kept an eye on you at all times. Why can't you just listen to me?"

Falconkit ignored him and just walked into the moss hollow. "What happened to your nose?" Petalkit asked, but he said nothing.

"My guess is he thought that he could take on a full grown warrior at five moons old with no training." Mudpaw growled.

"Shut up!" Falconkit shouted with a lash of his tail. "I already talked to my father and I don't want to hear any of this from any of you!" He turned and faced the wall, feeling all kinds of terrible, his heart hurt and he wanted to vanish. None of them talked to him again, he just curled up in the corner and waited for the battle to end.

While he waited, Falconkit's thoughts tore at him. Why did he have to be so weak? Why did Honeykit get to stay and help? Why was everything he did wrong? He just wanted to be a warrior. He heard footsteps approaching, and much to his dismay the voice that spoke was Lionclaw's. "The battle is over, you can come back to camp now." Falconkit stood up, but didn't look at anyone he passed. "When you get back to camp, Falconkit I want you to go to Pebblestep, then we can talk about what you did."

Once again, Falconkit kept his silent. He stuck near the back of the group but Mudpaw stuck close and he could feel his eyes burning into Falconkit's pelt. He no longer cared. They reached camp which reeked of AshClan, which he knew from that apprentice he fought. Falconkit walked to the medicine cat den, suddenly remembering this is where Honeykit was. She saw him and ran over to him with

fear in her eyes.

"Falconkit! You're nose is hurt! What happened to you?" Honeykit questioned, she seemed to be trying to sniff the wound. He pulled his head back.

"I need to talk to Pebblestep." He shoved past his sister towards the medicine cat. There were other cats in there as well. He saw Heatherflight, Snowtail, Cherryleaf, Yarrowtail and Snakewhisker all with various wounds.

"Well, I didn't think I would be treating a kit today." Pebblestep mewed as she placed a wispy herb onto Snakewhisker's flank. "Let me guess, you tried to fight and it was a lot harder than you thought?"

Falconkit dropped his ears and look down at his paws. "Um, yeah I guess." His tail twitched.

Pebblestep purred. "Well that's the first I've seen of this." She turned and looked down at Falconkit's nose. "It's not bad, and it's not deep but it's a wound alright. She grabbed a mouthful of golden flowers and chewed them up, then rubbing them on the bridge of his nose. A sharp, tangy scent filled his nose and the juices burned.

"Ow! That hurts!" He hissed.

"That's what happens when you fight." Snakewhisker spoke up. "Even as a full grown warrior, you'll get used to the herbs."

"You may of been stupid going out to fight like that," Cherryleaf added. "But you do have the warrior spirit inside of you, no doubt." Falconkit looked up at her, and felt his spirits being lifted. He was a warrior! And he got his first battle wound!

"You can go now, Falconkit. I'll be sending you sister back here in a moment." Pebblestep said. Falconkit turned away, not looking at his sister either. Now he had to go get scolded again, he went to Dawnstar's den and prepared himself.

Dawnstar was sitting in her den, licking some small wounds. "There you are Falconkit." Her voice was almost a sigh. "Your father told

me what happened." Falconkit turned as Lionclaw entered the den as well. "I'm glad you only got a scratch on your nose."

"I'm sorry for going out to fight, I shouldn't have done that." Falconkit apologized, keeping his head low and wanting this to be over.

"I'm sure you are." Lionclaw spoke, sitting next to Dawnstar. "We're not exactly mad at you, Falconkit. We just want you to know the dangers you keep putting yourself in and we're wondering whether or not you're ready to become an apprentice..."

"No!" Falconkit jumped to his paws. "You can't stop me from becoming an apprentice! I want to be a warrior more than anything!" He pleaded. Dawnstar and Lionclaw exchanged a glance. "I'll be an incredible warrior and you know it! I promise that I'll behave this next moon just please don't stop me from being an apprentice!"

Dawnstar sighed. "Very well, Falconkit. I know how much you want this and I know that's why you've been acting this way but you better behave. We want only the best for you, but I can't help but wonder."

"Please!" Falconkit cried.

Lionclaw let out a purr. "You really are a headstrong little kit, aren't you. Just behave and you'll be an apprentice before you know it.

Chapter 5

"Are you sure this is what you want, Honeykit?" Pebblestep questioned, her eyes curious.

"Yes, of course!' Honeykit mewed. "I loved helping you out during the battle, I want to help the cats of my Clan."

"This may not mean a lot now, but medicine cats are forbidden to have a mate or kits. Your duty is to your Clan." Pepplestep explained.

"I understand." Honeykit dipped her head, she really didn't care that she couldn't have kits, she just wanted to be a medicine cat.

Pebblestep's eyes glowed softly. "Very well, I'll be glad to have you as my apprentice." She purred. "Your ceremony is here soon, why don't you go join your brother and I'll tell Dawnstar." Honeykit nodded and bounded out of the medicine cat den, excitement rushing through her body. She was going to be a medicine cat! This is all she wanted, she would be able to learn every herb in the forest and help her Clanmates. She was so excited to get started as an apprentice, and so eager to learn.

Outside the nursery, Falconkit sat talking with Sedgekit, Petalkit and Dovekit, his eyes sparkling. Falconkit had kept his promise to their parents and behaved so he could become an apprentice. Honeykit still felt that her brother didn't like her very much, she wasn't sure what she did but they didn't play together anymore, it made Honeykit sad to think about. Falconkit didn't seem like playing in general, he talked about how he was too old for playing now. Honeykit didn't remember when he got so strict.

Honeykit shook away her thoughts and approached the group of kits, Petalkit was the first to greet her. "Hey, Honeykit! Did you get accepted as a medicine cat apprentice?"

Honeykit held her head high, trying to focus on how happy being a

medicine cat would make her. "Yep! I'm going to be Pebblestep's apprentice."

"That's so cool!" Dovekit purred. "You'll be able to help us warriors when we get hurt in battle!"

Honeykit felt a warmth in her heart, but that warmth turned frozen when she realized that her brother wasn't looking at her, he didn't look happy for her, he didn't look happy at all. Honeykit's ears flattened.

"Looks like the meeting is about that start!" Sedgekit pointed out. Honeykit turned and saw Dawnstar exiting her den and climbing the SunTree.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the SunTree for a Clan meeting." Her call rang out through the camp, Honeykit's excitement returned and she stood by her brother's side as they walked to the SunTree.

Rustpelt and Sandfoot left the elders den, walking side by side as theys at down. Lionclaw sat close to the tree and Cinderflame took her spot on the deputy's branch. Turtleblaze sat beside Fawnheart, Earthpaw and Mudpaw as they all began to listen in. Icepteal and Squirreltail struggled to keep their kits in the nursery and Goldenleaf went to her mate, Redclaw, she was certainly going to have kits any day now.

"Today is a proud day for SunClan, and for me in particular, as my kits have finally reached the age of six moons and are ready for their apprentice names." Honeykit and Falconkit sat in the center of the Clan, Honeykit felt a bit intimidated by the eyes that were focused so intently on her, but she kept her gaze on her mother. "Falconkit, step forward." Falconkit took a step forward. "From this day forward, until you have earned your warrior name you will be known as Falconpaw." Falconpaw stood tall and proud, Honeykit knew that he was excited to become an apprentice, even if he didn't show it. "I have chosen Cherryleaf as your mentor," Cherryleaf stepped forward, her eyes sparkling. "I would normally be against kin teaching an apprentice but I believe that Cherryleaf will be the best fit to teach you properly, the ways of the warrior."

Cherryleaf faced Falconpaw, the two of them touched noses and Falconpaw went to sit with the crowd. "Honeykit has chosen a different path, she has decided to become the next medicine cat apprentice." Honeykit's pelt grew warm as she heard voices behind her her. "Honeykit, from this day forward until you earn your true medicine cat name, you will be known as Honeypaw." She turned towards Pebblestep. "Pebblestep, you were taught by Poppyfur and I know that you will pass on all of the wisdom and teaches of a medicine cat to Honeypaw."

Honeypaw's paws buzzed with excitement, she stepped forward and touched noses with her brand new mentor. She couldn't be happier, this is all she wanted, was to be a medicine cat!

"Falconpaw! Honeypaw! Falconpaw! Honeypaw!" Honeypaw felt the welcome of her Clan and it warmed her heart, she lifted her head high. She glanced at Falconpaw who was facing Cherryleaf as the Clan meeting disbanded. Falconpaw's eyes glowed fiercely, Honeypaw let out a purr.

"Let's go, Honeypaw. "Pebblestep spoke up. "We have a lot to cover now that you're an actual medicine cat apprentice." Honeypaw eagerly followed her mentor into the medicine cat den. "Now, just because you have an apprentice name; you're not a full medicine cat apprentice yet."

"I'm not?" Honeypaw tilted her head. Why wasn't she an apprentice? Did she do something wrong?
"A medicine cat's true apprentice ceremony is in front of the Moonstone at the half-moon. That's where you meet with StarClan for the first time." Honeypaw's eyes widened, she had forgotten that she would meet with StarClan! "A medicine cat isn't only responsible for herbs and healing, we are also the closest cats to StarClan alongside the leader, we're even closer. It's our job to receive and interpret messages from StarClan to our leaders, we even join our leaders when they receive their nine lives, I was there when your mother got hers."

"That's incredible!" Honeypaw was in awe, she would get to meet StarClan! She would get to hear prophecies and other messages, she suddenly felt a stronger responsibility towards the Clan. "When do

we go to the Moonstone?"

"That won't be for a bit yet, but the half-moon in coming up soon, before the next gathering. In the meantime, I can still teach you more herbs and their uses. I taught you a lot before but now it's time to get more in depth." Pebblestep went to her herb store and returned with a bundle of herbs. "What is this herb and what does it do?" She pushed a pile of blue colored berries forward. Honeypaw gave them a sniff.

"Those are juniper berries, they're used to treat bellyache." She recalled in her mind when she learned about the berries, it was right before AshClan attacked.

"They also give strength, help with troubled breathing and can be used to calm down cats." Pebblestep added. "It's important to know everything an herb can be used for. Some only have one purpose, others have many." Pebblestep turned back to her store. "Now, I normally don't have a lot of these around...but if they're with me they are safe." She returned with a leaf bundle and set it down carefully. Inside were bright red berries. "These are deathberries, and they are incredibly deadly." Honeypaw stared at the berries. "Did you ever hear about Willowkit?"

"She was my aunt right, my mother's sister? She died when she was just a kit." Honeypaw recalled the story she heard from her mother.

Pebblestep nodded. "It was because she ate deathberries that she died. There's a yew bush in an area of the camp, I pick and get rid of the berries every time they grow as to prevent kits from eating them. I want you to remember what they look like."

Honeypaw looked at the berries, memorizing the bright red berries. "So if I cat eats these, they will die?"

"Not always, there are measures we can take to try and help them survive." She pushed forward another herb, it was a soft looking flower. "This is where yarrow comes in. Yarrow can be used to induce vomiting so the poisoned cat can get the toxins out of their system." Honeypaw sniffed the herb, and got the picture in her head. "Deathberries aren't the only poisonous herb out there

though, I don't have any more will me but I will tell you what there are. There's foxglove seeds, which I have personally never used but they can cause paralysis, holly berries aren't as bad as deathberries, but they can be dangerous to kits. Nightshade is about as poisonous as deathberries, and they're only use is to end a cat's suffering. I've only ever heard of one case of that, finally there's water hemlock which again has no purpose and it causes a horrible death. I'll show you all of these if we find them in the wild, but just remember the names and how to treat poison."

"Pebblestep!" Honeypaw jumped as she heard Icepetal's call. The white she-cat was standing in the medicine den entrance. "Goldenleaf is having her kits." She explained, a twinge of excitement of nature in mew.

Pebblestep's eyes grew soft. "It's about time," She turned to Honeypaw. "Your first day as an apprentice is going to be an exciting one. Did I ever tell you what helps during kitting?"

Honeypaw tried to remember, she could only remember one herb. "Borage, right? It helps with milk." Pebblestep nodded.

"But that's not until after the kits are born. Right now we just need some moss, a stick, some chervil and possibly some fennel." Pebblestep mewed. "You grab the moss and the stick and I will grab the other herbs. She hurried to her herb store and Honeypaw ran to collect some moss and find a stick, though she wasn't sure what for. She remembered when Sedgekit, Dovekit and Petalkit were born but she didn't see any of it. Honeypaw grabbed a ball of moss in her jaws and managed to get a stick in her jaws as well, it hurt but she held them tightly. Honeypaw met Pebblestep as she left the herb store. "Get that moss wet then meet me at the nursery."

Honeypaw nodded and walked to the drinking pool, her pawsteps were awkward from all the moss in her jaws. She set everything down at her paws and dipped the moss into the water, getting it wet then ran to the nursery with a mouth full of wet moss. Sedgekit and all the other kits were outside.

"Honeypaw!" Petalkit greeted happily. "You're helping?"

"She's a medicine cat now, duh!" Sedgekit nudged her sister. "Of course she's helping!" It suddenly dawned on Honeypaw that she really was doing her first job as a medicine cat, helping a queen have her kits. Honeypaw left the kits and entered the den, Icepetal and Squirreltail were inside, ready to help and Redclaw was laying beside Goldenleaf, rasping his tongue over her ear.

"There you are, Honeypaw." Pebblestep mewed, she had a pile of herbs at her paws. "Give Goldenleaf the stick and keep the moss by me. I want you to stay up by her head and try and relax her." Honeypaw nodded and follow her mentor's orders, she sat up by Goldenleaf's head.

"Are you excited, Honeypaw?" Goldenleaf asked. "These kits are going to be your cousins." Honeypaw suddenly remembered that, she let out an excited mew.

"I'm very excited, and I'm happy that I get to help!" Honeypaw nudged the stick towards her. "Here you go." Goldenleaf let out a purr and secured the stick in her jaws, that was when Honeypaw realized it was to help with the pain. "How bad does kitting hurt?" Honeypaw asked curiously.

"I'll have to tell you later." Pebblestep mewed. "But for now we need to focus on helping Goldenleaf."

Honeypaw nodded and watched Goldenleaf, she seemed fine at the time. Honeypaw looked over at Pebblestep who was running her paw over Goldenleaf's large belly. "It won't be long now, Goldenleaf." Honeypaw saw a ripple in Goldenleaf's belly and her eyes went wide. She stared at her belly, there were tiny little kits in there! Kits that were going to come out soon!

Goldenleaf suddenly let out a loud yowl of pain causing Honeypaw to jump in alarm, her teeth clenched the stick. Was she okay? What was happening? "Are you alright?" Honeypaw asked.

"That's normal, Honeypaw." Pebblestep assured her, making Honeypaw feel slightly better. "Just keep her calm, alright? Give her some of that chervil, it's the spiky one and it should smell sweet." Honeypaw sniffed the pile of herbs and pulled out the sweet

smelling chervil, giving some of it to Goldenleaf who chewed it quickly, making a face from the taste.

"Thank you, Honeypaw." Goldenleaf mewed quietly then put the stick back in her jaws, it wasn't long before she bit down on the stick once more, yowling in pain. Honeypaw stayed near her head, trying to keep her calm while Redclaw did the same thing. This went one for a long time, Honeypaw kept looking from Goldenleaf to Pebblestep, waiting for something to happen.

"Here comes the first one." Pebblestep announced after what seemed like forever. Goldenleaf cried out in pain, and Honeypaw heard something hit a nest. Pebblestep lowered her head and pulled up a small bundle of wet ginger fur. "Redclaw, lick this kit and get its blood flowing." Redclaw took his kit and began lapping it's fur. "There's another one coming now, you're doing great Goldenleaf."

"It's almost over." Honeypaw purred into her ears. "Your kits are gonna be so cute, Goldenleaf. I can't wait for you to see them." Goldenleaf let out a small purr before yowling in pain once more.

"Icepetal," Pebblestep mewed. "I want you to take this one." She handed Icepteal another ball of ginger fur. Icepetal instantly listened and began lapping at the kit. After a few moments, Goldenleaf stopped making pained mews. Now she was just panting with her eyes closed. "That's it." Pebblestep purred. "You two now are the parents to a lovely tom and she-cat."

"Just what we wanted." Goldenleaf purred to her mate. Redclaw set down one kit, the tom-cat and Icepetal gave her the she-cat. Each of them were letting out tiny mews for their mother. They nuzzled into her belly and began to drink. Honeypaw couldn't take her eyes off the kits, she was astonished. First they were inside of Goldenleaf and now they were in the world with the rest of SunClan. "Thank you, Honeypaw." Goldenleaf looked up at her. "I'm glad you were able to help me with my kits, they're adorable aren't they?"

"They are." Honeypaw purred. "I love them so much." She looked at the kits, warmth filling her chest. "Nice to meet you, little kits." She mewed quietly. "What are you going to name them?"

"We talked about it before they born." Redclaw added, looking at his kits. "And if there was a ginger she-cat we wanted to name her Hollykit."

"And if there was a ginger tom he would be named Burnkit." Goldenleaf added, her green eyes filled with love as she looked at her kits.

"Hollykit and Burnkit are wonderful names." Pebblestep purred. "I'll leave you two to enjoy them. Let's go, Honeypaw." Honeypaw tore her eyes away from Hollykit and Burnkit and joined her mentor as they left the nursery. "You did a good job for your first time, Honeypaw. I'm proud of you."

Honeypaw felt pride bubbling up inside her. "Really? Thank you. It felt really good to help Goldenleaf."

"Delivering kits is probably the best feeling you can have as a medicine cat." Pebblestep mewed, her voice soft. "Especially when they're healthy. I'm glad this was your first experience."

Honeypaw purred. "I'm glad it was too." This was her first day as a medicine cat but she was already excited for the future, she wanted nothing more than to help her Clan.

Chapter 6

"We're exploring the territory" Cherryleaf mewed as they walked away from the Clan meeting towards the exit of camp.

"Why not battle training? Or hunting?" Falconpaw complained, he wanted to learn how

to fight! So he could get revenge on that stupid AshClan apprentice for scarring his nose.

"Be grateful I'm not making you collect moss." Cherryleaf said, but her tone wasn't hostile; it was playful. Falconpaw sighed, at least he would be able to see the forest. He had spent the past moon listening to every command and holding his tongue so he could become an apprentice today. Honeypaw had been serious about becoming a medicine cat. He wished she would've became a normal apprentice with him, because until Pikekit, Larkkit and Sorrelkit became apprentices it would just be him with Mudpaw and Earthpaw and he really didn't want to share a den with Mudpaw.

"Pay attention!" Cherryleaf hissed, snapping Falconpaw out of his thoughts. "You need to watch the forest, this is your territory and you need to have every single part of it memorized. If AshClan invades again, you will always have the advantage of fighting in your own territory. Learn the best places to hide, to attack and where to trap your enemies. You also need to know the best and worst places to catch prey."

Falconpaw did understand her point and tried his best to focus on the forest around him. This part of the forest was similar to the part he had explored, but he could smell a million different scents. He wanted to learn them all, he wanted to learn the different scent of each piece of prey. He dug his claws into the soft forest soil, the forest filled him with so much life and energy. This was where he belonged.

"We're nearing the AshClan border, can you smell it?" Cherryleaf

questioned. Falconpaw lifted his nose, breathing in the scents around him. He recognized the foul scent from when he fought the AshClan apprentice.

"Yeah, I can." Falconpaw replied. "Where is the border?" Cherryleaf moved forward.

"The border starts at this tree, it's one of the bigger trees in the forest so it's noticeable." Cherryleaf explained. "The border goes all the way until the river, which we will look at next." They turned away from the AshClan border walking deeper into the forest. The trees and thick brush gradually began thinning out until they came to they came to a clearing not far from the river. "This is the river that separates us from the gathering hollow. We cross at the stepping stones up ahead." They walked along the river banks. "This is where SunClan stayed during the fire."

Falconpaw remembered vaguely crossing the river to take shelter from the fire. "Did you hide here with the Clan?" He questioned Cherryleaf.

The tortoiseshell shook her head. "No, I was still in AshClan at this time. I didn't leave AshClan until your mother came to come get me."

Falconpaw stopped. "You used to be in AshClan?"

Cherryleaf nodded. "My father, Thornstar, was the SunClan deputy until he tried to kill the former leader, Flowerstar. When your mother stopped him he was exiled but went to AshClan and killed Lionstar, taking over the Clan. When me, Briarrose and our brother Thrushclaw were all kits he stole us from SunClan and we lived there until your mother came to come get us."

Falconpaw looked forward. He had heard about Thornstar, and knew that they were kin but he never heard that particular story. "I didn't know that." He replied. "What happened to Thrushclaw?"

"Thrushlaw decided to stay with our father after myself and Briarrose decided to leave, but he died during the battle." Cherryleaf's eyes stared straight forward, her eyes didn't seem to be

sad, Falconpaw couldn't tell what she was feeling. "But that story doesn't matter now. We're almost to the MoonClan border." Falconpaw accepted her dropping the story and looked ahead. The river branched off into two different directions, Cherryleaf turned into SunClan territory. "MoonClan's border is this river, it's a pretty hard border to miss and you try and cross into MoonClan's territory you'll probably fall in the river."

Falconpaw sniffed the air, MoonClan had a different scent from AshClan's, but he still didn't like it. "Where is LichenClan's border?"

"We don't share a border with LichenClan," Cherryleaf added. "LichenClan's territory is on the other side of the gathering hollow, so we don't often have an issue with them. You'll probably only ever see a LichenClan cat at Gatherings."

"When's the next gathering?" Falconpaw questioned, he wanted to see that stupid apprentice again.

"Not for quite a while." Cherryleaf chuckled. "But you better behave yourself or I will keep you in camp and you won't get to go."

"What do you think I'll do?" Falconpaw snorted.

Cherryleaf nudged him. "Knowing you, it could be anything." She let out a mrrow of amusement. Falconpaw stuck his nose in the air, why did every single cat think he was going to cause trouble. He lashed his tail. "Let's head back into the forest and I'll show you the training area." Falconpaw's spirits lifted at the thought of the training area, where he would learn to battle!

The trees began to thin out once more, there was a clear dusty area in the center, it was empty now but he could see paw prints and kicked up dust. "This is the training hollow, we'll probably come here within the next few days to start your battle training." Cherryleaf explained as they padded across the sand. It felt good underneath his paws, he couldn't wait to start training! Cherryleaf looked up at the sky, the sun was just barely falling from the sky. "I suppose we have some time left, why don't we get in a basic hunting lesson?"

"Yes, please!" Falconpaw beamed, he wanted this more than anything! Cherryleaf's eyes sparkled with amusement.

"Very well, follow me." Cherryleaf moved forward back into the forest. "This is a good place to catch mice, but first you need your hunting position. Show me a hunter's crouch." Falconpaw confidently dropped into a crouch, what could be easier than a hunter's crouch? He laughed to himself. "Your backside is too high in the air and your legs are too far apart." Cherryleaf criticized.

Falconpaw looked up at her. "What? Does it really matter? It's a crouch!" Cherryleaf shook her head.

"Very well, try your way on a piece of prey. Try and catch a mouse all on your own. I'll wait here."

Falconpaw rolled his eyes and padded forward. It couldn't be that hard to catch a mouse, it was a mouse! They didn't use the term mouse-brain for nothing. Falconpaw's eyes scanned the forest floor until he spotted a tiny, brown mouse scurrying under a leaf. Falconpaw dropped into his crouch. He would so Cherryleaf, his hunting crouch was perfectly fine!

He took a step forward, a twig snapping under the weight of his paw. The mouse perked up and looked like it was ready to run. *You're not getting away from me!* Falconpaw leapt forward, but completely misjudged the landing. He hit the ground awkwardly, kicking up grass and dirt. He lifted his head and the mouse was long gone from his sight, Falconpaw cursed under his breath.

"So," Cherryleaf spoke, scaring Falconpaw causing him to scramble to his paws to face her. "Will you let me teach you now? I'm the one with actual warrior training, after all."

Falconpaw stood up and snorted. "Fine, show me." Falconpaw watched as Cherryleaf dropped into a crouch. She was lower to the ground than he was, and kept her hind legs and forelegs closer to her body. Falconpaw watched her intently, tilting his head and keeping an eye on her movements. Cherryleaf crept forward, until she leaped suddenly and landed cleanly on a leaf.

"Try and copy me, if you do it right you should land on your prey spot on." Cherryleaf explained, turning to Falconpaw. Falconpaw dropped into a crouch, trying his best to imitate Cherryleaf. His eyes focused on a leaf, he narrowed his eyes and leapt forward. He slid forward, his paws hitting the leaf awkwardly but he still caught it. "Not bad, now let's try and find some prey, maybe you can actually catch something. Falconpaw nodded and sniffed the air, trying to trace the mouse he had lost earlier.

Falconpaw trekked through the forest, keeping his eyes peeled for any signs of prey. He kept his nose high, and padded along until he caught a trace of mouse. He closed his eyes and breathed in the forest scents around him, trying to pinpoint exactly where the mouse was. He followed the trail that his nose gave him, opening his eyes to see. Just near the roots of a tree was the mouse he had scented, contently nibbling on a nut. Falconpaw dropped into the crouch that Cherryleaf had showed him, unsheathing his claws he crept forward. Careful not to make any noises.

Falconpaw leapt forward, his hind paws skidding on the dirt but Falconpaw managed to catch the mouse, killing it with some struggle. "Not bad." Cherryleaf padded up behind him. "You'll be better once we start more training lessons."

Falconpaw glared at her. "I caught it, how could I be better then that?"

Cherryleaf flicked her tail over his ears, he ducked his head. "You've got a lot to learn, and hopefully you're willing to learn it." Falconpaw snorted. "Now grab your mouse and take it back to camp. We'll do more training tomorrow." Falconpaw grabbed his mouth, keeping his arguments to himself. He would learn faster than any other apprentice. He bet that Mudpaw didn't catch prey on his first time out!

Falconpaw followed Cherryleaf back to camp, they reached the entrance just as the sun was beginning to set. Falconpaw held his head high as he carried his prey to the fresh-kill pile. "Did you catch that?" Falconpaw set down his prey and turned to see his father.

"Yes, I did." Falconpaw puffed out his chest.

"Good job." Lionclaw nudged him. "Keep it up, soon you'll be an incredible warrior. I knew that Cherryleaf was a good choice for your mentor."

Falconpaw looked away, all Cherryleaf did was teach him the hunting crouch. He caught the mouse! "Yeah." He muttred.

"Falconpaw!" Cherryleaf called as she stood beside her sister, Briarrose. "Get some prey then get some rest, we start training bright and early tomorrow."

That made Falconpaw feel better, he wanted to train as much as he could. Even if he trained from dawn to moonhigh! He turned to his father. "I'm gonna eat and get some sleep, I'm excited to train."

Lionclaw's eyes sparkled. "I'm proud of you, Falconpaw." He nuzzled him, Falconpaw ducked away. Lionclaw chuckled. "Have a good night." He mewed then walked past him to the leader's den. Falconpaw looked at the fresh-kill pile and decided to pick his own mouse and sit beside the drinking pool to eat it.

"Falconpaw!" He looked up to see Honeypaw bounding over to him, he blinked when she reached him. "How was your first day of apprentice training? Did you see all the territory?" Her green eyes sparkled.

"It was good." Falconpaw looked at his mouse. "I caught this mouse, and yeah I saw both the AshClan and MoonClan borders."

"That's so cool!" Honeypaw sat down, letting out a purr. "I just learned about herbs today."

"Isn't that what you wanted?" Falconpaw looked at her, slightly confused. "To learn about herbs and such."

"Yeah it is, and I love learning about it. I wasn't complaining." Honeypaw looked up. "It's all so interesting."

"That's good." Falconpaw looked down at his paws, not sure what to say. He wasn't really mad at Honeypaw, he just didn't know what to think of her. She had chosen a completely different path than him. He took the final bite of his mouse. "I'm going to go get some sleep,

I'm training early tomorrow. " Falconpaw stood up and looked at his sister who stood up with him.

"Alright, good luck tomorrow!" Honeypaw purred and turned back to the medicine cat den. She wouldn't even be sharing a den with him, she slept in the den with the medicine cat. He held his spite and padded outside of camp. It had seemed like forever ago when he ran out here as a kit and ran into the adder. Falconpaw shook his head and approached the apprentice den.

Earthpaw and Mudpaw were already in there, talking to each other. Mudpaw looked up at Falconpaw as he entered. "So you survived your first day of training? How many times did you try and show up Cherryleaf?"

Falconpaw flattened his ears. "I caught a mouse, what did you catch your first day as apprentice."

"I caught a squirrel." Mudpaw sneered, Falconpaw held his claws. He wanted to claw the smug look on his face.

"Oh, knock it off." Earthpaw laughed. "Toms, I swear." She flicked her tail. "It's not all a competition." She stood up. "But if it was...I would win." She ran her tail across Mudpaw's shoulders. "You both know she-cats are better hunters."

Mudpaw groaned. "I can't tell who is more arrogant, you or him?" He rolled his eyes. "I'm going to sleep." He curled up in his nest, Earthpaw laughed to herself and curled up into his own nest beside him. Falconpaw looked around, forming his own nest on the other side of the den. It was a large den, he had a lot of space to himself. Which he enjoyed, but part of him wished that Honeypaw would be here with him.

Chapter 7

"Coltsfoot, daisy and mallow leaves." Honeypaw turned her gaze from the three herbs in front of her to her mentor who sat expectantly in front of her. Pebblestep's steps eyes were judging yet soft.

"Very good, now tell me their uses." Pebblestep added with a twitch of her tail, Honeypaw looked back at the herbs.

"Coltsfoot for coughs, mallow leaves for belly aches and daisy..." Honeypaw trailed off, scanning her mind as she struggled to recall what the white flower was used for. She looked up at her mentor again, ashamed she couldn't remember.

"Daisy is for joint pain, but it also has one other use." Pebblestep swept up the herbs with her tail. "Which is why I tested you on it." Honeypaw tilted her head, what could the other use be? Was a cat in the clan sick? "Daisy is a traveling herb, along with sorrel, chamomile and burnet."

"Traveling herbs? For when a cat has to go on a long journey?" Honeypaw questioned. How often did cats go on journeys? And why did she need to know now?

"Or when cats travel to the moonstone." Pebblestep's mew was a gentle purr, she placed the herbs in her store and looked back towards Honeypaw. "That's why I'm telling you about them now, because tonight is the half-moon."

Excitement sparked inside Honeypaw, she stood up tall. "Really? Tonight is the half-moon? That means we go to the moonstone, right? Where I have my true medicine cat apprentice ceremony?" The questions tumbled out of Honeypaw's mouth like loose rocks, she couldn't contain her excitement, she had been waiting to go to the moonstone since she had became an apprentice!

Pebblestep's eyes grew soft like heather. "Yes, we travel to the moonstone tonight. You will get to meet the other medicine cats

and also StarClan. I will hold a ceremony for you when we reach it."

Excitement raced through her veins, she couldn't hold it down. "When do we leave? How far is it?"

"Calm down, young one." Pebblestep rested her tail gently on Honeypaw's shoulders. "We will leave before the sun sets, but beware it's a long journey. We'll take some traveling herbs but you should eat here soon, the herbs keep you from getting hungry." Pebblestep explained and returned to her herb store. "In the meantime would you take some fresh moss to the nursery? The apprentices have been slacking on that."

"Right away!" Honeypaw trotted out of the medicine cat den and towards the moss hollow, the sun was high in the sky and the camp was quiet, most cats must be out hunting or on patrol. Honeypaw exited the camp, welcoming the scents of the forest as stepped into it. She walked along the forest floor, feeling the warmth of the sun beating down on her pelt as she made her way to the moss hollow.

In the days since she had become an apprentice, she loved everything about her training. She loved learning about and remembering all the herbs she could, she wanted nothing more than to be the best medicine cat she could possibly be. Honeypaw walked down the slope into the hollow, feeling the soft moss under her paws. She went to the farthest wall, which was thick with moss and began clawing balls off the wall and setting them by her paws. The nursery was full so she had to make sure she had more than enough for every queen and kit in there.

When she had sufficient amount, Honeypaw secured the moss in her jaws and padded out of the hollow and towards the nursery. She re-entered the camp and and approached the den. As per usual, Sedgekit, Dovekit, Petalkit, Larkkit, Sorrelkit and Pikekit were playing outside. Larkkit and his siblings had grown quite a bit since Honeypaw had become an apprentice. Larkkit was just as big as Honeypaw now, and Sorrelkit and Pikekit were not much smaller. They would be apprentices in less than a moon.

Honeypaw approached the nursery, the playful kits looked up as they heard her paw steps grow closer. Petalkit was the first to

bound over to her, her blue eyes glittering. "Honeypaw! You're bringing us moss today?" Sedgekit and Dovekit were at her side as well.

"So how's it like being medicine cat apprentice?" Sedgekit questioned with a flick of her tail, her eyes also sparking with curiosity. Honeypaw set down her moss so she could speak.

"It's amazing." Honeypaw purred, she pushed the moss into the den and greeted the two queens that were inside. Goldenleaf rested her nest as she watched Hollykit and Burnkit toss a smaller ball of moss to each other. They weren't very old, but they were just as playful as the others. Squirreltail was resting as well, her eyes closed but her ears perked up. Icepteal had returned to the warriors den, feeling her kits were old enough to care for themselves in the den but visited all the time. Squirreltail's kits were old enough as well, but Pebblestep told her that Squirreltail couldn't return to her warrior duties because her eyes were injured in the fire, she wasn't completely blind, but Pebblestep her vision was pretty much gone.

"I have moss for you." Honeypaw mewed, Squirreltail opened her eyes. Around them was small burn scars and a fog in her green eyes.

"Thank you, Honeypaw." Squirreltail stood up and helped roll up the current moss into a ball for Honeypaw to take out. "It's been awhile since we got new moss, and every time we do it's always thin and has rocks in it." Her tone was mildly annoyed. "And it's always from Falconpaw."

Honeypaw's pelt burned slightly as she set out the new moss for the queens and kits. "I don't think he likes that part of being an apprentice so much." She wished her brother would take more care in the moss he got for the queens and elders.

"Well he should." Squirreltail's ears twitched. "No apprentice likes gathering moss, but he shouldn't take it out on elders and kits."

"I suppose I could talk to him." Honeypaw looked at her paws, she really didn't want to give her brother another reason to be annoyed with her, they were finally on somewhat decent terms, even if they

didn't really talk to each other.

"Please do." Squirreltail mewed and laid down her fresh moss, letting out a content sigh. "That's much better. Thank you, Honeypaw. You're shaping up to be a wonderful medicine cat."

Honeypaw's pelt burned hotter, she looked away bashfully. "Well, thanks. I hope I can be as good as Pebblestep someday." Squirreltail let out a purr, and Honeypaw pelt shoving as Sedgekit pressed against her.

"So what do you do as a medicine cat apprentice?" She questioned, Honeypaw pushed the soiled moss out of the den and turned to speak to the kits.

"Well, Pebblestep mostly teaches me about herbs, how to use them and where to find them." Honeypaw explained. "There's not much more too it than that." Honeypaw suddenly remembered the exciting news she had learned. "But tonight I get to go to the moonstone and speak with StarClan."

"Really?" All six kits had tuned in to listen now, their eyes wide with excitement. "How far is the moonstone?" Petalkit questioned.

Honeypaw shrugged. "I know that we have to go through MoonClan territory to get to it though, and I have to take special herbs so the journey is easier."

"Which herbs?" Dovekit asked with a tilt of her head, her whiskers twitching as she questioned Honeypaw.

"Daisy, which soothes joints, sorrel which helps with appetite, chamomile which helps keep relaxed and burnet which helps with strength."

"Wow." Pikekit mewed with awe. "There's a lot of herbs out there." He pointed out. "How do you know so many? Does Pebblestep know them all?"

"I'm not sure if she knows every herb out there, there are so many we probably haven't even used. I know that there are certain herbs that only AshClan or LichenClan uses because they don't grow in

our territory." Honeypaw explained, a feeling of satisfaction warming her as she saw the bright glow in the kits' eyes.

"Honeypaw!" Honeypaw jumped slightly and looked over her shoulder, Pebblestep was standing outside the medicine cat den, her head high. "Are you done with the moss? It's almost time to go. Eat something then we will head out."

Excitement twinged in her paws, she looked at the kits. "Sorry, but I have to go, I'll tell you all about it when I get back, though!" The kits bid her farewell and returned to their game. Honeypaw grabbed and quickly disposed of the old moss before grabbing a mouse to eat. She ate it quickly, her paws itching to leave. She wanted to see the moonstone so bad! After she ate, Honeypaw returned to the medicine cat den where Pebblestep was chewing something, there was a pile of herbs on the ground which Honeypaw recognized as the traveling herbs

"Eat your herbs." Pebblestep mewed. "It's quite the journey to the moonstone, and we'll want to get there before moon high. That's when the moon touches the moonstone." Honeypaw nodded and swallowed her herbs, trying to ignore their bitter taste. Excitement and eagerness swam through her blood like the fish in the river, she was so ready!

"I'm ready to go." Honeypaw mewed and Pebblestep nodded, the medicine cat stood up and they left the den together. "So do we go through MoonClan territory to get there?"

Pebblestep nodded. "We have to cross a branch to get there, it's over the river. It may seem scary at first but it's not too bad."

Honeypaw walked beside her mentor through and out the exit of SunClan's camp. This would not only be her first time leaving SunClan territory, but also her first time meeting cats from other Clans, including StarClan! She had to restrain herself from breaking into a sprint to get their faster. Honeypaw and Pebblestep passed through the thick brush of SunClan's territory, Honeypaw could hear the sounds of the forest, including the flapping of bird's wings and the scuttling of mouse. She had no hunting experience, but she loved hearing it. Knowing that SunClan's territory was full of prey

and life, especially after the fire.

Pebblestep v "The river is thinner up here, and there's a branch we have to cross. We have to walk through more of MoonClan's, but Ravenheart and Onepaw will meet us there." She explained, Honeypaw tried to imagine the MoonClan medicne cat and his apprentice, she couldn't wait to meet them!

"Who are the other medicine cats? What are they like?" Honeypaw questioned as they moved through the forest.

Pebblestep let out a gentle purr. "So impatient. You'll have to wait and see." Pebblestep flicked her tail. Honeypaw felt the herbs working, her muscles felt strong and her energy was high. "We'll be there before you know it."

SunClan territory was a lot bigger than Honeypaw knew, she hadn't explored this area of the territory before. She could feel the moisture from the river, the grass was wetter and she could hear the faint sound of moving water. Through the trees, Honeypaw could see the sun reflecting off the river. Honeypaw and Pebblestep pushed through the undergrowth and emerged to see the river. She gazed across the river and saw flat land, almost no trees in sight. *That must be MoonClan territory!*

"You see that herb there?" Pebblestep motioned with her paw to a purple plant growing on the river banks. "What is it?"

Honeypaw approached it and sniffed it, remembering the smell. "It's watermint right? This is where we find it?"

Pebblestep nodded. "It grows all along the river bank, it's a very good herb to have in store, belly aches are quite common." She mewed then approached the river, gazing across. "This is where we cross. You should be fine, but just watch me so you don't fall into the river."

Honeypaw tensed and looked at the flowing water of the river, it didn't look fast or dangerous but she didn't know how deep it was, and she certainly didn't know how to swim. An image flashed of Honeypaw falling into the river, the cold water churning and

tugging at her fur.

"Honeypaw, pay attention!" Pebblestep's voice grew sharper. "You won't fall in, just watch me, okay?" Honeypaw snapped out her frightened thoughts and focused her gaze on her mentor. Pebblestep step onto the branch, it remaind steady under her pawsteps and she slowly crossed. It wasn't long before her paws were safely on the other side. "Now you." She called over.

Honeypaw looked at the branch, and the surging water below. She took a deep, shaky breath and placed one paw on the branch. It didn't shake or move, but her nerves were still going crazy. Honeypaw continued, putting one paw in front of the other and focusing on the ground ahead of her. Finally, she put her paws on stable earth and looked up at her mentor.. "Good job."

Honeypaw felt relief bubble up inside her and she stood up straight, looking around her. She was now in MoonClan territory, the smell of the river surrounded her mixed with something else, something strong and unappealing to her. *That must be how MoonClan smells.* She sniffed the air as it grew stronger, she suddenly became on alert as two figures approached them from the moor. MoonClan's territory was so wide and open, how did they live like that?

"Calm down." Pebblestep rested her tail on Honeypaw's stressed shoulders. "That's Ravenheart and Onepaw, I told you they would meet us here. Honeypaw relaxed, as her former excitement began to fill her once more. The sun was starting to fall beyond the horizon, but using the remaining sunlight Honeypaw could make out what the two cats looked like. The larger tom, Ravenheart, was black but his dark fur had specks of white from his obvious old age. The other tom must have been Onepaw, a slender silver tom.

"Greetings, Ravenheart and Onepaw" Pebblestep called in a kind mew, Ravenheart and Onepaw grew closer, they were only mouse lengths in front of them.

"Greetings, Pebblestep." Ravenheart dipped his head, his amber eyes turned to Honeypaw. "This must be the cat you told us about last time."

Pebblestep nodded. "This is my new apprentice, Honeypaw." Pebblestep turned her blue eyes to Honeypaw expectantly.

Honeypaw figured out what she wanted and dipped her head. "It's nice to meet both of you." She said kindly. Ravenheart let out a chuckle.

"Shall we go then?" He suggested. "The others should be arriving here shortly." He added on, Pebblestep agreed and they began walking along the river, Honeypaw followed close to Pebblestep, she looked at Onepaw. He appeared to be much older than Honeypaw, he was about the size of Mudpaw.

"How long have you been Ravenheart's apprentice?" Honeypaw questioned him, trying to make a conversation.

Onepaw looked at her. "A few moons now, how are you liking being a medicine cat?" He asked in return.

Honeypaw lifted her head. "Oh, I love it." She purred. "Pebblestep is such a good mentor, I've already learned so much."

Onepaw's eyes were soft, he turned his gaze back on where he was walking. Honeypaw watched the river as they walked, she had seen why Pebblestep made them cross where they did, it was much wider and deeper where they were. Soon the river split into three different sections, one through MoonClan's territory, one through SunClan's and one heading straight ahead.

"When we cross this river we will be in neutral territory, that's where we will head to the moonstone." Pebblestep explained. Honeypaw looked forward and saw three figures standing in the neutral territory that Pebblestep explained. Two of them were fully grown cats, the other about the size of Honeypaw. As they grew closer, in the moonlight she could see what they looked like. There was a silver tabby tom, and close to him was a smaller black tom, talking to the larger tom was a pale ginger she-cat.

"There they are." Ravenheart mewed as she stepped over the thin river, much more of a stream than a river.

"Welcome," The she-cat mewed, her eyes met Honeypaw's. "Are you Honeypaw?" She questioned. Honeypaw nodded as she carefully crossed the stream, she knew it wasn't a danger but she didn't want to trip and make a fool of herself in front of the other medicine cats. "It's great to meet you, my name is Roseheart, I'm the LichenClan medicine cat."

Roseheart's gentle purr soothed Honeypaw, she felt a lot more comfortable. "It's nice to meet you, Roseheart."

"My name is Skyfeather," Honeypaw assumed he was the AshClan medicine cat. "And this shy tom is my apprentice Blackpaw." Blackpaw looked at her, annoyance flashing in his yellow eyes.

"Nice to meet you." Blackpaw's mew was low, and he sounded like he was upset, his tail twitched.

"Blackpaw was just made an apprentice last half-moon, and he hasn't quite warmed up to all the other medicine cats just yet." Skyfeather explained with a light purr in his tone. "So forgive his rudeness." Blackpaw let out a snort and looked away.

"We should go." Ravenheart suggested. "The moon is almost at it's peak and we still have the ceremony to go through." The rest of the medicine cats agreed and they continued walking, the moon grew higher and the stars shimmering in Silverpelt. Honeypaw noticed white trees in the distance, the moonlight reflecting off of them; causing them to cast a silver glow that shone off the cats' pelts.

The glow cast an eerie feeling throughout Honeypaw's body, she kept her head low and she wasn't sure why but she feel like she could hear whispers throughout the trees. "We call this place the Spirit Woods." Pebblestep mewed. "And if you look ahead...you'll see the Spirit Tree." Honeypaw focused her eyes forward, through the dark she could see a large, looming tree with the same white bark as the surrounding trees, Honeypaw stared in awe at the huge tree, it's roots clawing out of the ground, and at its base a wide, gaping hole leading into pitch blackness, unease gripped Honeypaw's heart.

"We're about to go in, don't speak until we reach the moonstone,

alright?" Pebblestep mewed, Honeypaw stared into the darkness and nodded slowly. "Then follow me." Ravenheart was the first to step into the tunnel, he was quickly consumed by the blackness. Onepaw followed, and Skyfeather, Blackpaw, Roseheart and Pebblestep were not far behind. Honeypaw braced herself as she stepped inside, the coldness touched her fur and her vision was reduced to nothing. As she took careful steps forward, she could feel cold, damp earth underneath her paws. The only sound to her ears was the other medicine cat's breaths and pawsteps.

As Honeypaw delved deeper into the tunnel, she felt the walls grow in around her, close enough for her whiskers to brush the edges. Honeypaw felt trapped, she didn't want to be in this tunnel any longer, but she kept pushing forward. She couldn't turn back now, this was her duty as a medicine cat! The walk felt like ages, but the walls fell back away from her body, and a bright, silver glow allowed her to see again.

Honeypaw winced at the light for a moment, and felt her breath leave her chest as she met a large, glowing stone, turning all their pelts to silver. Honeypaw was wonderstruck by this stone. *The moonstone.* She felt an immense power coming from this stone, her paws were planted firmly where she stood and her eyes stuck on the stone until Pebblestep spoke.

"It's time for the ceremony." She mewed, her voice echoing off the wall of the cavern. "Are you ready?" Honeypaw nodded slowly, for some reason this ceremony felt a lot different than her first apprentice ceremony. "Honeypaw, is it your wish to enter the mysteries of StarClan as a medicine cat?"

Honeypaw had never seen this ceremony be done before, she didn't want to mess it up so she spoke what she thought would be appropriate. "It is."

"Then step forward." Honeypaw took a shaky step closer towards the moonstone, she could almost feel it's power. "Warriors of StarClan, I present you with this apprentice. She has chosen the path of a medicine cat. Grant her your wisdom and insight so that she may understand your ways and heal her Clan in accordance with your will." Pebblestep stepped beside Honeypaw. "Now lay

down and touch your nose to the moonstone, StarClan will then come to you."

The other medicine cats had already gone to the moonstone and were laying down beside it, resting their noses against it. Honeypaw followed them, laying down beside her mentor. She stared into the stone, it looked as if the stars themselves had been captured inside. Honeypaw closed her eyes, and touched her nose to the stone. A freezing, gripping coldness overtook her entire body and Honeypaw saw a spiral of blackness and stars.

Her body felt heavy and when she opened her eyes she was no longer in the moonstone cavern but in flat, field, the moon high in the sky. Honeypaw sat up and looked around. Where was she? Was this StarClan? Where were the StarClan cats?

"It's nice to finally meet you, Honeypaw." Honeypaw jumped to her paws and looked around in alarm, she spotted a pure golden she-cat. Her fur shimmering, when she moved it appeared as if there were stars in her pelt.

"Who are you? Are you a StarClan cat?" As the she-cat grew closer, a warm feeling of comfort surrounded Honeypaw, she slowly began to relax.

"Yes I am." The she-cat's voice felt like lavender to Honeypaw's ears. "My name is Honeywing."

Honeypaw suddenly remembered hearing stories of this she-cat. "I know you! You're the old SunClan medicine cat! I was named after you."

Honeywing let out a purr. "I'm glad you were told of me, and I'm even more glad that I get to speak to you now."

Honeypaw stepped closer to Honeywing, feeling instantly safe with this cat. "Why is that?"

"I've been keeping a close eye on you and your brother, I knew that both of you would have great lives ahead of you." She let out a happy purr. "I'm not going to lie though, I always hoped you would

chose to be a medicine cat."

Honeypaw purred in return. "I've been interested in it for a long time, and I want to help my Clan."

"That's the same reason I chose to be a medicine cat." Honeywing mewed, looking up at the sky. "All I wanted was to help, and that's exactly what I did until the day I died. I know that you will do the same, but keep in mind you have a very different destiny that I do." Honeywing returned her star-filled green gaze to Honeypaw. "I want you to follow your heart and live your life the way you want to,, the way you think is best."

Honeypaw let out a soft purr. "Thank you, Honeywing." She wasn't entirely sure what the StarClan cat met by destiny, but her words were soothing. "I'm really glad I met you." Honeypaw purred. Honeywing stepped forwarding, touching her nose to Honeypaw's nose. "Now return to your fellow medicine cats, I will see you at the next half-moon."

Honeypaw closed her eyes as warmth surrounded her, when she opened them she was back on the floor of the moonstone cavern, the medicine cats around her began to rouse as well. Honeypaw looked to Pebblestep who was in the middle of stretching. "Pebblestep!" She exclaimed. "It was so incred--" Pebblestep silenced her with her tail.

"You can't speak of your experience to anyone, Honeypaw, but I'm sure it was incredible." Honeypaw held her tongue, but how could she hold it in? She had met a StarClan cat! Excitement filled her heart and soul, she felt like an entirely different cat, now. She was a true medicine cat apprentice now!

"We will return her at the next half moon," Pebblestep mewed. "But now it's time to go home."

Chapter 8

Honeypaw rose from her next with a heavy yawn, she stood up and stretched out her limbs. She looked around the medicine cat den, Pebblestep's nest near the herb store was already empty and tidied up like she did every morning. Honeypaw turned her gaze to outside the den, she could see the clear blue sky with the sun casting shadows onto the forest floor. Honeypaw stepped out of her nest and looked outside, it was already sunhigh. She hadn't meant to sleep so late into the day, but they had returned home late the night before after their journey to the moonstone. Honeypaw had been so exhausted from the long journey as well as her experience meeting Honeywing.

Honeypaw took a step outside, into the camp. As she left the medicine den, she heard voices and the rustling of the camp's entrance. She turned her head to see a border patrol returning, led by Yarrowtail with Redclaw, Mudpaw, Adderstrike, and Rainears, Mudpaw was talking intently to his mentor who listened eagerly in return. Honeypaw's ears twitched as she heard her brother's voice. She turned to her left and saw he and Cherryleaf joined with Earthpaw and Snakewhisker as they approached the patrol.

"Redclaw, I was thinking about taking the apprentices out to teach some tree climbing, would you and Mudpaw like to join?" Snakewhisker questioned, Earthpaw looked excited and even Falconpaw showed a bit of excitement for the news. Honeypaw watched the group, tree climbing sounded interesting. She should learn how to climb trees at some point, they were good for hiding.

"There you are, Honeypaw." Honeypaw heard a gentle voice and turned away from the group of warriors to Dawnstar padding up to her. "Pebblestep wanted me to tell you when you woke up to go find some borage, she said you're running low."

Honeypaw's mind flashed to their herb store, the borage had been a bit low. "Yeah, I will. Where is she?"

"She went out to Jagged Rocks to get some herbs, she should be back here soon. Then she wanted you to take some of the herb to Goldenleaf, she's been having slight troubles producing milk." Dawnstar explained.

"Alright." Honeypaw purred. "Thanks for telling me, I'll get right on that."

"How did your moonstone travel go last night?" Dawnstar asked before Honeypaw had a chance to run off to get her herbs.

"It was amazing, unlike anything I've ever seen." Honeypaw explained in awe to her mother. "I love being a medicine cat."

"I'm so glad to hear that." Dawnstar brushed her muzzle against Honeypaw's. "Now go get those chores done before Pebblestep returns."

Honeypaw nodded and bounded away from her mother, if she remembered correctly; borage grew around the apprentice den. She pushed her way outside the back entrance of camp and padded through the undergrowth of the forest to the apprentice den. She had only seen the apprentice den a few times, and she forgot how big it was each time. It must be very spacious inside of the den for the three apprentices, the amount of cats sleeping in there was about to be doubled however. Whenever Larkkit and his littermates became apprentices, and a moon later there would be three more cats in there as well with Sedgekit and her siblings.

Honeypaw enjoyed sleeping in the medicine cat den, it was only her and Pebblestep in there, and it was very peaceful. She was surrounded by the scent of herbs as she slept, a scent that made her feel very comfortable in her nest. She knew that when cats were injured or sick they would sleep in the medicine den with her and Pebblestep, but Honeypaw didn't know the next time a cat would be seriously injured.

Honeypaw embarked on her hunt for the borage, she sniffed the air and caught a faint whiff of it in the air. She shoved aside bushes and foliage, looking for the plant. She was sure this was where she found borage. She was about to search somewhere else until

something blue caught her eye. Honeypaw turned and finally spotted the pink and blue star-shaped plant. Honeypaw bit the flower off at it's stem and carried a small bundle of herbs in her jaws. Pebblestep always told her not to take every last bit of an herb so it could regrow and they could return for more.

With the herbs secured, Honeypaw began her short trek back to the camp. Her first stop back in the camp was the medicine cat den where dropped off the majority of the borage she had gathered, taking only one of the flowers for Goldenleaf to consume. She hoped that this herb would help Goldenleaf feed her kits, they weren't quite ready for fresh-kill yet, they still needed their mother. Honeypaw crossed the camp, and as per usual she was greeted by the playful kits outside.

"Honeypaw!" Petalkit was the first to jump up and greet her. "You never told us what happened at the moonstone, last night." She pestered, Honeypaw let out an amused purr.

"Let me give this to Goldenleaf first." Honeypaw mewed through her teeth so she didn't drop the herb. Honeypaw stepped inside, Squirreltail was sleeping soundly, curled up in her nest, only her tail twitching slightly. Goldenleaf was watching Hollykit and Burnkit as they played, her chin resting on her paws. "Here's some borage, Goldenleaf. Pebblestep wanted me to give this to you."

Goldenleaf looked up and ate the herbs without issue then laid her head back down, her green eyes were dark with tiredness, it couldn't be hard raising two kits as well as looking after six more. "Thank you, Honeypaw." She mewed softly, then returned to watching her kits play. Honeypaw dipped her head and turned back outside the den where the kits eagerly waited.

"So what happened at the moonstone?" Sorrelkit questioned, her eyes wide and excited.

"Did you meet StarClan?" Dovekit added, twitching her ears and her eyes sparkling. Honeypaw let out a soft chuckle.

"I'm sorry but I can't tell you anything about my meeting with StarClan," Honeypaw explained herself to the kits. They all looked

down in disappointment, their ears and tails drooping towards the ground. "But I can tell you about the trip there, I was in MoonClan's territory for a while. Each of the kits sprang back alive with excitement.

"Really? You went to MoonClan territory?" Sedgekit echoed. "What was it like? Did you meet a MoonClan cat?"

Honeypaw nodded, taking a seat to tell the story to these kits. "I got to meet all the other medicine cats from the other Clans."

"Who are they?" Pikekit questioned.

"What were they like?" Larkkit added.

"Well, the MoonClan medicne cat is Ravenheart and his apprentice is named Onepaw. Ravenheart is older, but he's really kind and so is Onepaw." Every kit listened intently to her words. "Then there's the LichenClan medicine cat Roseheart who also really nice, and the AshClan medicine cat Skyfeather and his apprentice Blackpaw." She recalled Blackpaw's coldness, he didn't even say a word to her other than it was nice to meet her. "Skyfeather is nice but Blackpaw didn't say much."

"I can't wait until I get to meet the other Clans. " Pikekit spoke up. "It's gonna be so cool!"

"You'll have to wait until you're an apprentice, and then until a gathering." Petalkit replied.

"That's less than a moon away." Sorrelkit piped in. "Then we'll be apprentices!" She beamed.

"I wonder who our mentors will be?" Larkkit added into the conversation, the kits had broken off into their own conversations, Honeypaw took that as her queue to leave. Surely there was more to be done in the medicine cat den. Honeypaw left the kits to do their own thing and returned to the den. When she stepped inside, Pebblestep had returned as well and was setting down herbs in the herb store.

"I did what you asked, Pebblestep." Honeypaw announced as she

entered the den. Pebblestep glanced over her shoulder.

"Good job, thank you." She mewed then put her head back into the store, she must be arranging the herbs.

"Anything else you need me to do?" Honeypaw asked, wanting to put her paws to some use.

"Not at the moment no, why don't you get us some fresh-kill while I sort these herbs and we can relax." Pebblestep's purr was light, Honeypaw lifted her head high and padded out of the den. She looked towards the fresh-kill pile was was fully stocked, a normal sight during the season of greenleaf. Honeypaw stepped towards it and was picking through the pile, about to decide on a mouse to eat when she heard familiar voices, Honeypaw looked up and watched as Snakewhisker and his group entered the camp, clearly they had gone climbing trees but something seemed wrong.

Snakewhisker appeared to be held up by Redclaw and Cherryleaf, his left hind leg wasn't touching the ground. The three apprentices trailed behind him, Earthpaw looking at her mentor with concern swimming in her green eyes. Snakewhisker however had pain in his eyes and a twinge of something else. "Honeypaw!" Mudpaw shouted her name once he spotted her. "Where is Pebblestep?"

Honeypaw padded over to them. "She's in the medicine cat den, what happened?" Honeypaw questioned. Where they attacked? Was Snakewhisker injured?

"Snakewhisker fell out of a tree and hurt his leg." Redclaw explained calmly. "He needs to see Pebblestep."

"I'm fine." Snakewhisker spoke up, his voice strained. "Just let me rest for a moment and I'll be good as new."

"You can't even put any weight on it, Snakewhisker." Cherryleaf argued. "Just let Pebblestep see what's wrong."

"I'll go get her." Honeypaw didn't wait, she dashed away from the group of warriors to the medicine cat den, she poked her head inside to see that Pebblestep had finished organizing her herbs.

"Pebblestep, Snakewhisker hurt his leg and he needs your help." Pebblestep looked up, a bit of confusion in her eyes then marched out of the medicine cat den, Honeypaw quickly followed behind her.

"What happened?" Pebblestep asked as she approached the group, her tone stern and questioning.

"I was showing the apprentices how to climb trees, the branch I was on snapped and I fell out of the tree." Snakewhisker explained, not meeting any cat's gaze. "I'm sure it's fine, I just need to rest."

Pebblestep let out a snort. "I'll be the one to decide that." She took a step forward, ducking around behind Snakewhisker and touched her nose to his leg. She didn't have a sense of smell, what was she doing? "Your leg feels hot, it's swollen and there could be more to it." She stepped back around in front of him. "Take him to my den." She turned to look at at Honeypaw. "Go get a nest ready for him so I can look at his leg properly."

Honeypaw gave a quick nod, then bounded away to the medicine den in a hurry. If Snakewhisker's leg was broken, he would need a good nest and fast. Honeypaw grabbed a bundle of moss and formed a nest near the entrance to the den, not far from Pebblestep's nest, she remembered where Pebblestep had put Heatherflight's nest after she had been injured by AshClan and she stayed in the medicine cat den for a few days.

Right as she made a suitable nest for Snakewhisker, the injured cat had arrived. Honeypaw stepped back so she was out of the way. Cherryleaf and Redclaw carefully lowered Snakewhisker into the nest, he let out a hiss of pain as his leg touched the ground. "Careful" He growled.

"Thank you, you two." Pebblestep mewed, dismissing Cherryleaf and Redclaw. "You two can go now, I'll let you know what's going on, keep Earthpaw from pestering me as well." Redclaw and Cherryleaf nodded before stepping out of the nest. "How badly does your leg hurt, Snakewhisker?" Pebblestep question as she moved in to examine his leg some more.

"Not too bad." Honeypaw looking into his eyes, she could see the pain written clearly on his face and in his eyes.

"Don't lie to me, Snakewhisker. There's no other cats in here but us, and I need to know so I can help you." Pebblestep replied, her voice tender and caring.

Snakewhisker sighed. "It hurts a lot, actually. Even when I'm not walking on it." He admitted, staring at the floor.

"Thank you, Snakewhisker." Pebblestep purred softly and began running her forepaw along his leg. "Honeypaw come here." She instructed. Honeypaw stood by her mentors side. "Touch his leg, gently though." Honeypaw nodded and very gingerly placed her paw on his leg. It felt hot, and swollen. Not like how a leg should feel.

"It's hot and swollen." Honeypaw pointed out. "What's wrong with it?" She questioned and looked up at her mentor for an answer.

"It's broken." Pebblestep said bluntly. "You'll be off warrior duties for a while, Snakewhisker."

Snakewhisker let out a sigh. "That's what I was afraid of." His meow sounded pained, but not just from his injury.

"It's not the end of the world, Snakewhisker. Broken bones can heal, and that's what Honeypaw and I are here for." Pebblestep turned to Honeypaw. "And I can teach you how to help heal a broken bone. Keep your leg still, Snakewhisker, I need to grab some herbs. " Pebblestep left her patient to go to the herb store, Honeypaw followed her and peered into their collection of herbs. "We're going to need a few things for this..." Pebblestep sorted through her herbs.

"Now we're going to need some broom...some stinging nettle...some rush...comfrey root and poppyseeds." Pebblestep nudged some herbs towards Honeypaw, a thick black root, and some long narrow leaves. "Carry those over to Snakewhisker, we need to bind his leg." Pebblestep grabbed her own herbs, a clump of small yellow flowers and a spiny plant. Pebblestep and Honeypaw returned to Snakewhisker.

"Chew the stinging nettle and and broom into a poultice for his leg." Pebblestep instructed, and Honeypaw listened. She chewed the bitter herbs until they were in a decent poultice, which she had seen Pebblestep do before. "Once you're finished rub it on his leg gently, it will help relieve the swelling and pain." Honeypaw rubbed the poultice slowly onto his leg, until it was coated. Pebblestep moved her gently out of the way and began using the long, rush leaves to wrap his leg. Once his leg was covered in the leaves Pebblestep returned to the store and came back with a flurry of cobwebs. "The cobwebs will secure the rush leaves so his bone can stay in place." Pebblestep explained, Honeypaw nodded, watching her every move.

Pebblestep used the cobweb and wrapped his leg until there was thick layer of the white cobwebs until the rush was no longer visible. Pebblestep pushed a leaf with tiny, black poppy seeds scattered about. "Eat these, it will help with the pain."

Snakewhisker lapped up the seeds, then looked up at Pebblestep and Honeypaw. "Thank you, Pebblestep," He turned to Honeypaw. "You as well Honeypaw."

Honeypaw felt warmth growing inside her, she had actually helped another Clanmate! "It's what we do, Snakewhisker. Just try and rest, you need to heal. Your leg will be healed before you know it." Snakewhisker nodded and adjusted himself, he placed his chin on his paws and closed his eyes. "Come on, Honeypaw." Pebblestep nudged her. "Let's go get something to eat, we never did before all of this happened."

Honeypaw nodded, her stomach growling at the the thought of fresh-kill. They left the den for Snakewhisker to get some rest, they were instantly greeted by Earthpaw and Adderstrike. "What's wrong with Snakewhisker?" He questioned, her eyes full of concern for his father.

"He's fine, Stormwind." Pebblestep mewed. "He has a broken leg, he just needs some rest for a while."

"What about me?" Earthpaw questioned. "I need a mentor, he can't train me on a broken leg."

Pebblestep nodded. "I understand Earthpaw, I'll tell Dawnstar about this when she returns from patrol and she will assign you a new mentor. For now, just let Snakewhisker rest and you get some rest yourself. Don't drive yourself mad with worry, he's going to be fine."

"Thank you, Pebblestep." Adderstrike dipped his head and he and the brown apprentice parted ways.

"One issue as a medicine cat," Pebblestep had a slight chuckle in her mew. "Is that if any cat gets the smallest injury, their loved ones are worried sick. You should've seen Icepetal when Sedgekit got scratched by a bramble."

Honeypaw let out a *mrrow* of laughter. "I remember that, she was so little but it was barely bleeding."

Pebblestep let out a purr. "Being a medicine cat can be hard, but it can also be the most rewarding feeling in the world."

Chapter 9

The forest was dark, there wasn't a single star in sight and the moon was nowhere to be found. Falconpaw looked around, extending his claws and digging them into the moist dirt beneath his paws. Danger was pricking at his pelt like a thistle, he couldn't shake the feeling of dread. What was going on? Where was he? A shadow darted quick as a rabbit in the corner of his vision, Falconpaw spun around on his paws just to see nothing

"If there's someone out there you better show yourself!" Falconpaw shouted, his voice loud and demanding. "I'll shred your pelt!" There was no response, there was no sound at all. Falconpaw couldn't even hear his own breathing. The silence was chilling him to his bones, Falconpaw shook his head, he wanted out of this stupid place!
"Shut up, you mouse-brain." Falconpaw's eyes shot open, he lifted his groggy head to see Mudpaw glaring at him. Was he talking in his sleep? Falconpaw looked down at his nest to see his claws had been working away at the moss and the bracken, he had been so nervous in his dream he had acted in the real world. Falconpaw sat up as Mudpaw drifted back to sleep. Falconpaw gazed out the den entrance, the sky was lit with gentle shades of pink, yellow, blue and purple. Dawn was just on the horizon, Falconpaw figured it would be better to get up.

Falconpaw had been experiencing the same, strange dream every night. He wouldn't exactly call it a dream or nightmare, just a night time experience. It was probably nothing more than a dream. Falconpaw exited the apprentice den, he wasn't normally awake this early. The early morning dew still sparkled on the foliage of the forest. Falconpaw pushed past it, sections of his pelt growing slightly damp. Falconpaw stepped into the camp, it was quiet and still. Not even the kits were awake yet, the only cats who would be awake would be the dawn patrol. He wondered if Cherryleaf was awake, maybe he could join the patrol.

Falconpaw moved farther into camp but saw no sign of his mentor, he however did see Cinderflame organizing the patrol. The cats that stood with her were Fawnheart, Brackenpelt, Turtleblaze and Briarrose. Falconpaw approached the forming patrol, he seemed to have caught Cinderflame's attention. "Falconpaw? I normally don't see you awake this early." She greeted kindly. "Cherryleaf have something planned for you two?"

Falconpaw shook his head. "No, I just woke up." He looked around. "Is Cherryleaf even awake?" He questioned.

"She was still sleeping when I left the warriors den. " Briarrose answered. "I don't think she was planning on getting up at dawn."

"Well since you're up," Cinderflame mewed. "Would you like to join us on the dawn patrol? It's never a bad idea for an apprentice to join us."

Falconpaw lifted his tail high, he loved going on patrols and he had never gone on the dawn patrol before, maybe Cherryleaf was just lazy. "I would love to go with you." He mewed lightly. Cinderflame's amber eyes were soft. "Then come along, we're going to the AshClan border."

Falconpaw eagerly fell in with the patrol as they left the camp, he loved the smell of the forest this early in the morning. He walked in pace with the rest of the patrol even pulling ahead of Fawnheart and Turtleblaze who walked side by side. "How's your training been going, Falconpaw?" Turtleblaze asked as Falconpaw passed them. His ears dropped slightly.

"It's been going good." Falconpaw replied curtly and with a flick of his tail. He could hear a slight snicker from Fawnheart.

"I've been getting complaints that the moss being delivered to the nursery and elder's den hasn't been very good lately." Turtleblaze mewed, his voice strict. Falconpaw let out a groan, he was sick of hearing about moss: him being a warrior had nothing to do with moss. "Don't get snippy with me, I'm getting the same complaints about Mudpaw and Earthpaw. You need to be careful, one of the kits or elders could get thorns or rocks jabbing into them."

"Yeah, I'll keep that in mind." Falconpaw groaned and walked even farther ahead, nearing Cinderflame's lead. She was the Clan deputy, she probably didn't have to deal with stupid things like moss. Collecting moss was just a tactic to keep apprentices busy when they weren't hunting or training. Why didn't the senior warriors have to collect moss? He shook his head slightly. He couldn't wait to be a real warrior, where he could do whatever he wanted. All the border patrols and hunting he pleased.

They moved through the forest, Falconpaw sniffing the air. He could scent AshClan in the distance, they neared the border. Falconpaw always went on alert when he was near an enemy border. He never knew when he would run into the enemy and need to fight, especially if it was that flea-pelt apprentice he fought. He couldn't wait to fight her again and shred her stupid pelt.

"You need to relax, Falconpaw." Cinderflame mewed. "You're so tense, if we ran into an AshClan patrol they would think you're looking for a fight."

Well, they're not wrong. Falconpaw let out a snort, he really was looking for a fight. With that one apprentice, he didn't even know her name. He let out a sigh and forced himself to relax. They reached the AshClan border and much to his disappointment, there were no cats in sight.

"We must have just missed the AshClan patrol." Cinderflame pointed out. "The scent is really strong, stronger than usual." She narrowed her amber eyes.

"Think they're trying to tell us something?" Briarrose questioned, a slight nervousness to her voice.

"I'm not sure." Cinderflame mewed as she marked the border herself.

"It's AshClan so it could mean anything. " Fawnheart added. "Do you think we should tell Dawnstar about it?"

"I'll mention it to her," Cinderflame replied, leading her patrol away from the border. "I don't think it's anything to make a fuss of."

"Is AshClan going to invade again?" Falconpaw questioned the deputy, clearly they were trying to signal that they were pushing the borders!

Cinderflame chuckled. "My guess is no, Riverstar just wants to show that her Clan is strong. This is probably her way of doing so. Don't get too worried, little one."

Falconpaw ducked his head, he wasn't worried and he wasn't little! He wanted a chance to defend his Clan, he wasn't scared of a battle, he wanted one! Falconpaw let out a silent groan and followed the patrol back through the forest, the soft dawn sky had now faded into a solid blue with few, wispy clouds covering it. The sun was slowly rising to it's place in the sky.

They entered camp and Falconpaw broke away from the patrol, he spotted his mentor in the distance. She was sitting outside the warrior's den talking with Cloudspots, she seemed to be enjoying the conversation quite a bit. Falconpaw twitched his tail and approached her, interrupting her conversation. "What are we doing today?"

Cloudspots shot her a look, then let out a laugh and walked away from Cherryleaf and Falconpaw. "Very rude introduction," She shook her head but had a light laughter to her mew. "And we're going hunting in a different location."

"Where is that at?" Falconpaw questioned, a bit eager to hunt somewhere else. Where else could it be other than the forest?

"A place you've been before actually." Cherryleaf stood up, flicking his ear tips with her tail. "We're going out by Jagged Rocks."

"Jagged Rocks?" Falconpaw tilted his head, remembering when he had nearly been bitten by an adder out there. "Isn't that dangerous?"

"We're not hurting at Jagged Rocks, we're just hunting in that area. You need to learn how to hunt in an open space. It's a very useful skill to have." Cherryleaf explained. "Now come with me, let's get started, the adders won't really be around until sunhigh anyway and they normally stick to the rocks. Just don't be a mousebrain and

you won't die." She sneered at him.

Falconpaw rolled his eyes. "Helpful." He bounded after his mentor as they exited the camp. They made their way past the moss hollow and apprentice den until the trees thinned out into the large field that Falconpaw hadn't seen since he was a kit.

"When you're hunting in an open space," Cherryleaf began talking. "You have limited cover and your prey can see you a lot easier than they normally would be. Keep the wind in mind when you're hunting, make sure that your scent is not being blown towards your prey or they will get away."

Falconpaw listened to her advice, the wind was gentle today so it shouldn't be much of an issue, but he still took it into consideration.

"I want you to go try and find some fresh-kill, return to me when you've found something, just stay clear of Jagged Rocks if you can." Cherryleaf instructed him. Falconpaw nodded, enjoying the feeling of freedom from doing his own thing, he figured that Cherryleaf understood that and let him learn on his own with advice.

Falconpaw sniffed the air, searching for any scent of prey. He padded through the field, also keeping an ear out for adders and avoiding the large, towering rocks in the distance. A breeze rustled through his pelt, and a scent of rabbit crossed his nose. He had never caught a rabbit before but he knew that this was where SunClan caught their rabbits. Falconpaw dropped to the ground, tracking the sweet scent of the rabbit. He stalked through the field, the scent was faint but growing somewhat stronger.

The rabbit scent stayed consistent, but one scent grew strong, and it wasn't rabbit. The overwhelming scent of AshClan swarmed his nose and he stumbled back. He had tracked the rabbit all the way to the AshClan border, he didn't think he crossed it, but more importantly he didn't think anyone saw him get this close. Falconpaw stood up, the scent of rabbit lost to him. He swore under his breath and walked along the AshClan border, attempting to locate the scent of his prey.

Falconpaw jumped as he heard the rustling of brush, it came from

the other side of the AshClan border, a black shape had its back turned to Falconpaw, it was crouched and unmoving. He could tell it was a cat, and it wasn't any bigger than an apprentice. It must be the apprentice he fought! "Hey!" Falconpaw shouted, the cat jumped and spun around to face him. Falconpaw realized with a groan that this wasn't the apprentice, not only did they not have the same white paws but it was also a tom-cat.

"Do you need something?" The apprentice questioned. "Can't SunClan cats mind their own business or do they need to yell at random cats across the border?"

Falconpaw rolled his eyes, already not liking this apprentice's attitude. "I thought you were someone else."

"What AshClan cat could you possibly be looking for?" The AshClan cat demanded. "Why do you even want to talk to an AshClan cat."

"I wanna get back at the stupid furball who scarred my nose." Falconpaw hissed. "Some stupid AshClan apprentice."

The apprentice's eyes went wide and he let out a laugh. "You must be the mouse-brained kit that fought my sister. She told me that she scarred your stupid face." Falconpaw dug his claws into the earth. "They actually made you an apprentice after you pulled that stunt?"

"Of course they made me an apprentice." Falconpaw puffed out his chest. "My mother is Clan leader, and I bet I could kick your sister's tail in battle now, yours too!"

The apprentice chuckled. "Well I would hope you could beat the medicine cat apprentice in battle otherwise you would be pretty useless wouldn't you?"

Falconpaw took a step towards the border. "Would you like to see me try?" He flashed his claws and bared his teeth.

"Yeah, that's a smart move." The apprentice flicked his tail. "Cross the AshClan border, that's a good idea." He turned away. "You should learn to control your anger, it will come back to bite you in the tail if you don't." With that, the AshClan apprentice vanished

into the forest. Falconpaw let out a hiss, and stalked away from the AshClan border. He hadn't caught any prey yet and he had gotten riled up by a stupid medicine cat apprentice. Part of him wished that all medicine cats were like his sister, at least she was nice, she probably would've ran away from an enemy warrior trying to fight her. Falconpaw shook his head, he needed to find some fresh-kill or Cherryleaf would have his tail.

Falconpaw turned away from the AshClan border, trying to pick up another scent. Luck was on his side and he caught the trail of rabbit, whether it was the same one or a different one, he began to track it. Falconpaw crept through the grass *away* from the AshClan border and soon spotted a fat, light brown creature. The rabbit was totally unaware that it was being stalked, Falconpaw took this moment to pounce. His paws landed square on the rabbit, biting into it's neck and killing it quickly. He grabbed his rabbit, it was pretty big, big enough to feed Squirreltail and the six other kits in the nursery.

Falconpaw secured the rabbit in his jaws and held his head high as he carried it back towards his mentor. He couldn't wait for the next battle, he could show both the warrior apprentice and that medicine cat apprentice that he was going to be the strongest cat in all of SunClan!

Chapter 10

Falconpaw dropped his rabbit on the fresh-kill pile with a flick of his tail. Cherryleaf hadn't said much about his catch other than "goob job" even though it was a rather large rabbit, one of the biggest pieces on the fresh-kill pile! He begrudgingly turned away from the fresh-kill pile, his tail dragging on the ground behind him. What did Cherryleaf know? It was an amazing catch, rabbit's were hard to chase down because they were so fast. That's why MoonClan was the main ones who ate them! Falconpaw snorted and sat down by the drinking pool to lap up some cool water. Between meeting the AshClan medicine cat and not being acknowledged for his great catch, he had gotten rather heated and annoyed.

"Where are the apprentices?!" Falconpaw looked up from the drinking pool and turned to where the yell at come from. Squirreltail stood at the nursery's entrance, the fur on her shoulders had risen and even from here he could see that there was fury in her blind eyes. Cherryleaf was the first to respond, she padded up to the angered queen.

"What's going on, Squirreltail?" She questioned. "Is something wrong?"

"Yes, something is wrong!" She spat. "There was a thorn in Hollykit's nest and it stabbed her near her eye!" As she spoke, Goldenleaf stepped out of the nursery behind Squirreltail with a wailing Hollykit in her jaws, Falconpaw could see a small trail of blood dripping down from Hollykit's face, Goldenleaf took her to the medicine cat den. Falconpaw didn't think it was that big of an issue, it was just a scratch.

"Falconpaw." Cherryleaf spoke up, her voice loud and stern. "Come here, please." Falconpaw groaned, but listened to his mentor and moved to stand beside her. "Weren't you the last one to give moss to the nursery?"

Falconpaw sighed. "Yes, I was."

"Do you not care about the kits?!" Falconpaw stepped back as Squirreltail snapped at him, baring her teeth and her green eyes blazing with anger.

"Of course I care about the kits!" He retorted. "It's not my fault there's a thorn in the moss." He twitched his ears, he wasn't responsible for every single thorn.

"Yes it is!" Squirreltail shouted. "You're the ones who gather the moss, if you did a good job then this wouldn't happen!" She turned on Cherryleaf. "Don't you teach your apprentice how to collect moss? You'd think even the stupidest apprentice could get some decent moss."

Falconpaw flattened his ears and dug his claws into the ground. Who did she think she was? Calling him stupid!

"I apologize about this, Squirreltail." Cherryleaf dipped her head respectfully. "We will have a stern conversation with all three of the apprentices."

"I don't see what the big deal is." Falconpaw growled, he could feel Squirreltail glaring at him. "She was just scratched."

"The big deal is where she was hurt, what if that thorn had actually gone into her eye? She could've been blinded!" Squirreltail hissed.

Falconpaw rolled his eyes."Well she wasn't, so it's *not* a big deal. I don't see why you're making such a big fuss over something stupid."

"Falconpaw that's enough!" Cherryleaf spat. "You need to learn to control your tongue and to respect your Clanmates!"

Falconpaw turned on his mentor, anger flaring up inside him like a raging fire. "If she's not going to respect me I'm not going to respect her!"

"You need to respect the kits!" Squirreltail spat, lashing her tail. "So far the only apprentice to bring good moss to us is Honeypaw, you could learn something from her!"

Falconpaw's claws dug deep into the ground. Of course Honeypaw

brought good moss, of course Honeypaw was the Clan favorite! He clenched his teeth and looked down, Honeypaw would always be the Clan favorite! Falconpaw turned on his paws and ran away from the two she-cats and out the back entrance of Clan, the anger inside him was boiling hot, he slashed his claws against the bark of tree, sending splinters of wood scattering across the forest floor.

He lowered his head and tried to contain his anger, he hated hearing about his sister, just because she was a medicine cat didn't make her StarClan's gift to the forest! Falconpaw sat down, letting the anger seethe out of him, his breathing was rough and shaky.

"Falconpaw!" He heard the call of his mentor, Cherryleaf came up the slope in a hurry. "What was that all about?"

Falconpaw whirled at her. "Because according to you all I do is mess everything up!" He snapped. Cherryleaf took a step back. "The entire Clan *loves* Honeypaw, she's so perfect isn't she? The wonderful little medicine cat apprentice! Why not have her do everything because the rest of us apparently can't!"

Cherryleaf sighed and sat down, she looked at Falconpaw, her eyes growing softer. "That's not what Squirreltail meant, Falconpaw." She let out quiet mew. "We don't like Honeypaw more than you and I don't want you to be Honeypaw. That's not who you are."

Falconpaw sat down, flattening his ears and looked away. "Are you gonna tell me to be more like my father? Like my mother?" He clawed slowly at the earth.

"I don't want you to be like your father or your mother because you. Are. Not. Them." Cherryleaf spoke boldly, Falconpaw shifted his gaze slightly back to her. "You're not Dawnstar, you're not Lionclaw and you're not Honeypaw. You're Falconpaw and I want you to be you, no one else." Cherryleaf gazed up at the sky. "Falconpaw, you have your own life to live and I see incredible amount of potential in you, I see the fire of battle in your eyes and I know you'll be an amazing warrior because you *want* to be an amazing warrior."

Falconpaw looked at his mentor, her eyes were soft and caring. "Thanks, I guess." Falconpaw looked down, his anger had faded and

now he just felt down. He didn't want to be Honeypaw or his parents, he really wanted to just be him like Cherryleaf wanted.

"We're going to have a moss collecting lesson, with you, Mudpaw and Earthpaw and you are going to apologize to Squirreltail." Cherryleaf stood up. "Being an amazing warrior also requires you respecting your Clanmates, you're standing with many souls; not just your own." Falconpaw didn't feel like arguing, he just kept his mouth shut and listened to what his mentor told him to do.

Falconpaw fell into his nest, his claws aching from clawing so much moss. He hated moss more than ever right now, and he got the feeling that Earthpaw and Mudpaw felt the same way as they settled into their own nests for the night. Falconpaw let out a heavy yawn and closed his eyes, welcoming sleep as soon as possible. He hadn't even been sleeping for a heartbeat when he opened his eyes, he was annoyed with himself that he couldn't sleep but then he realized he was back in the dream forest. He must have fallen asleep quicker than he thought. Falconpaw stood up and looked around, he was sick of this stupid forest. DId he really need to be here?

Falconpaw decided to explore this forest for the first time, he walked through the grass that crunched under his paws, this entire forest seemed dead and desolate. There wasn't even a single piece of prey in this place was there? Why did he keep coming here? Falconpaw stopped dead in his tracks as he heard rustling, he spun around. Trying to peer through the trees and spot whatever was near him. Falconpaw unsheathed his claws and raised his voice. "Stop hiding in the shadows like a coward, or I'll find you myself!" He yelled even louder. "I'll make sure you never try and sneak up on me again!"

"Oh, I'm sure that's true." A deep voice spoke behind Falconpaw, he jumped around in alarm and watched as a large, brown tabby tom stalked out of the shadows. His eyes were a fierce burning amber, and a long scar down his face. "No need to be scared, Falconpaw. I'm not here to hurt you."

Falconpaw took a defensive stance towards the stranger, baring his teeth in preparation for a fight, even if this cat was much bigger

than he was. "Who are you?" He demanded.

The tom's eyes sparkled. "Stand down, little warrior." He said, but his voice wasn't condescending. "My name is Falconclaw, I am your namesake."

"Falconclaw?" He tilted his head. "If I was named after you, why haven't I ever heard of you?"

Falconclaw sighed. "Well, my past is less than bright and I'm afraid SunClan doesn't like to talk about their flaws."

"Flaws?" Falconpaw echoed. "What flaws? Who are you? What did you do?" So many questions rolled around in his mind.

"Well, I am your father's great uncle, we don't have a close kinship but it is there." Falconclaw mewed. "I've been watching you for a while now, Falconpaw." He stepped closer. "You have a fire in your heart, one that I've rarely seen."

"What are you talking about?" Falconpaw met Falconclaw's gaze, his amber eyes burning fiercely.

"You've got the heart of a true warrior, and I've noticed that your other Clanmates haven't seen it. They make you do meaningless tasks and don't reward you for your achievements." Falconclaw's voice dug into Falconpaw, he stared at the floor. He had been forced to collect moss all day, and wasn't rewarded for his incredible catch. "And then there's your sister."

Falconpaw tensed up at the mention of Honeypaw. "What about her?" He questioned, his voice low.

"Everyone thinks she's better than you." Falconclaw mewed. "But they're wrong, she's just a medicine cat. Medicine cats only work for warriors, they don't do anything else. There's nothing special about learning what a few plants do. Their only purpose is to heal the warriors that protect them and their precious herbs." Falconclaw was standing close beside him. "Even your mentor won't teach you the important lessons, but I can."

Falconpaw turned on Falconclaw. "What do you mean you can

teach me? I barely even know who you are." He twitched his ears. "Why should I even trust you?"

"You're a smart cat, Falconpaw. I am your kin, and you can trust me; I know what's best. I was an incredible warrior in my time and all I want is to pass on what I knew to the future generations of SunClan warriors."

Falconpaw looked down at his paws, was he really considering this stranger's proposition? "What would you teach me?"

Falconclaw's eyes flashed. "How to fight properly, how to be the strongest warrior you can be." Falconpaw's claws itched with anticipation. "You will win every battle, you'll serve your Clan to the fullest and you'll be remembered as a legend among the four Clans, I know I was."

Falconpaw met his gaze, clearly this cat knew what he was talking about and if he wasn't happy with his training, he could always stop right? Falconpaw gave a swift nod. "Alright, I'll let you train me."

Chapter 11

Falconpaw stretched out his claws, waiting impatiently for Cherryleaf to show up. Today was his very first assessment and he was more than ready for it. His claws itched to catch some prey, his ears longing for the sounds of the forest. Being in the forest made him feel alive, powerful and in his rightful place. Falconpaw had been preparing for this assessment for the past two nights. Training in the shadowy forest with his night time mentor, Falconclaw. It had been five sunrises since Falconpaw was first approached by the mysterious warrior, and they had trained hard every single night. Hard battle training, Falconclaw only accepted the best. He was strict, stern and wouldn't settle for anything less than perfection and perfection is what Falconpaw aimed for.

Every night he woke up with sore muscles, at first he didn't understand why. He was only training in dreams, but he eventually grew used to it. *Pain is just weakness leaving your body, Falconpaw. Learn to live with the pain, it's a sign you're growing stronger.* Falconpaw fought through the pain and he could feel himself getting stronger every single night. Every time that Falconclaw threw him down, knocked him aside or pinned him down; he was getting stronger. The past few days they had been learning hunting, it surprised Falconpaw how much battling played into hunting. It was all about wounding your prey, and Falconpaw would always be the hunter! He would amaze Cherryleaf with his advanced training and with how much prey he knew he would catch.

The entrance to the camp rustled, Falconpaw's head lifted and he spotted Cherryleaf entering the camp, having a friendly conversation with Briarrose. Falconpaw padded over to her, his head held high. "Can we start the assessment yet?" He questioned without even a hello.

Cherryleaf let out a small laugh. "I just got back from a border patrol, give me a bit." He replied, twitching her whiskers. Falconpaw's claws scraped at the ground.

"I've been waiting for this all day!" He complained.

"I understand, Falconpaw." Cherryleaf mewed. "And we'll go soon, I'm just going to get something to eat then we can do. The forest isn't going anywhere." She brushed her tail along his pelt and padded across camp the fresh-kill pile with her sister. Falconpaw groaned and stomped away, sitting by camp entrance, waiting for her to finish. Falconclaw would never keep him waiting! Nothing was more important than training, Falconpaw needed to become the best warrior he could be.

After what seemed like an eternity, Cherryleaf finished eating and returned to Falconpaw's side. "Alright, let's go." She mewed and they pushed their way out of SunClan's camp and into the forest. The sounds and scents of the forest welcomed Falconpaw as he stepped into the thick undergrowth of his territory. "I wish we had another apprentice to assess alongside you, but Earthpaw and Mudpaw are a bit more advanced than you right now, so it's just you."

Normally, Falconpaw would feel some resentment for his sister at this point for throwing away her life as a warrior to be a medicine cat, but now he could show her that he was on the same skill level, perhaps even higher than the older apprentices! Falconpaw lashed his tail. "It's fine, I'll have the whole forest to myself to catch all the prey I can."

Cherryleaf let out an amused purr. "Well, not the whole forest. We're staying in a specific location." They continued on through the forest, nearing the training area and the MoonClan border. They stopped when the reached the training hollow and Cherryleaf turned to Falconpaw. "Starting from here to the MoonClan and Gathering Hollow borders, you can hunt. I will be watching you but you won't see me, catch as much prey as you can and then bring it back here, understand?"

Falconpaw dipped his head. "I understand." Cherryleaf gave him the signal to go, and he dashed into the forest. Leaves brushed against his coat and he lept over exposed tree roots. When he was far enough away Falconpaw breathed in the forest, searching for prey. Almost immediately he caught scent of a mouse. Dropping low to

the forest floor, his belly fur brushing against the leaves, he scanned the forest for the tiny, brown creature. Falconpaw spotted his prey on a rock, it's back to him. Falconpaw crept forward, stepping lightly on the ground rendering his pawsteps silent. The mouse was completely unaware.

With a perfect pounce, Falconpaw's claws met the mouse and he bit into its neck, killing it cleanly and quickly Falconpaw looked around, unable to spot Cherryleaf but he knew she was around. Falconpaw quickly buried his prey and continued his hunt. He had to do better than that mouse, it wasn't small but it wasn't fat. He needed bigger and better prey for his Clan! Only the best would do. Falconpaw moved forward through the forest, stopping as he heard a scurrying among leaves. He turned just in time to see a squirrel climb up a tree, the small creature looking around in alarm. Falconpaw scolded himself for not noticing, but made up his mind that he *had* to catch this squirrel!

The squirrel wouldn't come down unless it was sure it was safe, and Falconpaw certainly wasn't going to climb any trees! Not after Snakewhisker had broken his leg from falling out of one. He would have to do something else. Falconpaw searched the forest floor, his amber eyes falling on a few scattered nuts on the ground. Falconpaw pushed them forward with a leaf, careful not to get his own scent on them. He then crept back into a thick bush, the branches poking into his face but ignored it. He watched the squirrel intently, waiting in his spot until finally it began it's descent down the tree. Falconpaw's tail twitched eagerly, watching as the squirrel took his bait. Without hesitating, he pounced and killed the squirrel. Falconpaw examined his prey, this was much better! It was a fat, healthy squirrel. However, he still needed to catch more!

Falconpaw buried his squirrel and moved on, this time keeping his nose in the air; constantly searching for prey. It took him a while to catch another scent, but when he did it was another mouse. This one was much fatter than the other one, nibbling on a seed under some brush. It wouldn't even see Falconpaw coming! Falconpaw dropped into his crouch, pounced and killed once again. Confidence bubbled inside him, he hoped that Cherryleaf was impressed. He would be bringing back a hefty haul for the Clan! Squirreltail

wouldn't have anything rotten to say about him now. He buried the mouse and continued once again, determined to bring back as much prey as he could.

Falconpaw hunted hard, searching for prey in the thick forest. He had covered a lot of ground, catching another squirrel and mouse. Falconpaw realized his luck when he saw a robin on the ground, pecking at the earth below it. Excitement cracked inside Falconpaw like lightning and dropped to a crouch. Cherryleaf hadn't taught him how to catch birds yet, but Falconclaw had. Gearing up for speed, Falconpaw braced himself to jump. He pounced before the bird even had a chance to react, he heard wings flapping then pinned the bird to the ground and killed it.

Feeling incredibly confident in himself, Falconpaw decided that he had caught enough for Cherryleaf's liking and began to backtrack in order to find the rest of his prey. After picking up his entire catch, he returned to the training hollow where Cherryleaf waited, her eyes sparkling. Falconpaw dropped his fresh-kill at her paws and held his head high.

"You did an incredible job, Falconpaw." Cherryleaf purred. "I underestimated you, you learn quickly and you're a fantastic hunter." Falconpaw puffed out his chest, letting her praise surround him

Chapter 12

Honeypaw sniffed Snakewhisker's injured leg, the heavy scent of herbs wafted off of it but it wasn't as hot anymore. "How does it feel?" Honeypaw questioned. The gray warrior yawned.

"It's stiff and kind of sore." He replied, looking down at his leg. Honeypaw nodded, it was still broken, and probably would be for a while. Honeypaw turned away, cleaning up the herb scraps and discarding the ones that would no longer be of any use and placing the others back in the store. Pebblestep had gone out for more herbs, but Honeypaw had seen her change Snakewhisker's dressings many times, and she knew how to it herself confidently.

Honeypaw brought some new moss to Snakewhisker's nest so he could rest his leg comfortably and returned to her own nest, keeping an eye on the senior warrior. Snakewhisker was one of the oldest cats in the Clan, he was Adderstrike's father and Adderstrike had his own kits now. He didn't seem to be frustrated about being stuck in the medicine cat den, but there was something going on inside his head; she could see it in his eyes.

"Are you hungry?" Honeypaw asked, he hadn't eaten today and he couldn't get prey by himself, it was normally her job to get him fresh-kill.

Snakewhisker shook his head slowly. "No, thank you. I'll eat here in awhile. " He looked away, a far away gleam in his eyes. Honeypaw looked at her paws, what was wrong with him?

"Is there anything you need at all?" Honeypaw questioned, just wanting to be useful. She wanted to help him.

Snakewhisker turned his gaze to her. "Honeypaw, I understand you want to help but there's nothing that can be done right now."

Honeypaw's ears fell, she shuffled her paws below her, she didn't like doing nothing for her patient.

Snakewhisker let out an almost silent sight. "I'm sorry, Honeypaw." Honeypaw glanced up slightly. "I didn't mean to upset you, this is just hard for me. I just want my leg to heal, but I'm not sure it will matter." His eyes were cast downward.

"What do you mean?" Honeypaw questioned. "Do you think it will heal improperly? We will make sure it does."

Snakewhisker let out a small chuckle. "No, that's not what I think. I trust you and Pebblestep to take care of me." He looked up, his eyes getting somewhat lighter. "It's just, I'm clearly getting older and I just worry the Clan doesn't think I've done enough for them." He looked at Honeypaw, licking his chest in embarrassment. "Sorry, Honeypaw. You might not be old enough to understand this."

"That doesn't mean I can't listen," Honeypaw urged him to talk more. "It's my job to help you heal, and maybe that doesn't always mean physical troubles."

Snakewhisker's eyes grew soft. "That is true..." He stopped, as if he were considering not talking anymore, but he did continue to speak. "I was deputy for a very short time, after your grandfather, Tigertail was killed by a fox. However, I didn't feel right for the responsibility. I wanted to serve Flowerstar, I would've given my life to her. Her sister was the love of my life and Flowerstar and I had always been close because of it, but I didn't want to be deputy. I felt there were so many better cats to be deputy, and the thought of being leader terrified me. I didn't want to be a leader then or any time in the foreseeable feature...so I stepped down." Honeypaw listened intently, she had no idea that Snakewhisker had been deputy!

"I don't think most of the Clan judged me too harshly because of my choice, but I know a few cats did. Thankfully it only seemed to be Thornstar and Rockfur...and they left." Snakewhisker shook his head. "I was glad when I stepped down that Blazeheart had taken my place, your grandfather was a brave and strong cat and I knew he would serve the Clan well." Snakewhisker's eyes grew dark. "Then Thornstar became deputy and it scared me, luckily he was overthrown by your mother and she was a fantastic deputy." Snakewhisker looked at Honeypaw, his eyes growing bright again.

"Your mother was a bit unsure at first, but I was actually able to help her. Anytime she had a question about her responsibilities she would come to me for help and I felt useful to the Clan once more." Snakewhisker's eyes were wandering, as if remembering the past. "Then the battle happened, Stormwind died and Dawnstar no longer needed me." Snakewhisker looked at his paws. "For a while, I felt so lost without Stormwind. She was my everything, and I didn't know what to do. My grief kept me from being a useful warrior, then I was made Earthpaw's mentor and I vowed to help and be a better warrior." Snakewhisker glanced at his injured leg. "And then this happened, by the time I'm better Earthpaw will probably be a warrior. Heatherflight will teach her well, but I just feel like I've failed her."

"You haven't failed her, Snakewhisker." Honeypaw spoke up, feeling pangs of empathy for the warrior, she was scared that she would fail as a medicine cat, scared she would let every cat down. "Earthpaw understands, she loved you as a mentor and you taught her this much. I know my mother had two mentors, and so did Cinderflame." Honeypaw met Snakewhisker's gaze. "You're a great warrior, and I may not be very old but I know that much. Especially from what you've told me."

Snakewhisker's eyes lightened, like the first light of dawn. "Thank you, Honeypaw." He stretched his leg out slightly. "I just hope this heals soon, I don't wanna be out for too much longer." He looked down for a moment, then back up at Honeypaw; amusement glinting in his green gaze. "At least I'll have some friendly company while I'm here." Honeypaw let out a purr, a warm feeling flooding into here. Being a medicine cat didn't just mean healing physical wounds, it also meant helping with other issues as well, she felt a sense of accomplishment. She would enjoy having Snakewhisker around. "Would you mind getting me some prey, now? I've worked up a bit of an appetite."

Honeypaw nodded and quickly stood up. "Of course!" She was glad to put her paws to work. Honeypaw stood up, walking outside with her head held high. The sun was slowly falling out of it's place in the sky, but still lit up the camp nice and bright. She crossed the camp to the fresh-kill pile. Honeypaw looked through the pile,

looking for the best piece of prey for Snakewhisker. While she was sniffing for a piece of prey, she caught the golden brown pelt of her brother in the the corner of her eye. She turned her head and noticed Falconpaw and Cherryleaf returning from the forest, battle training she assumed. Honeypaw watched her brother, noticing his gait was off.

Falconpaw seemed to be favoring his forepaw, limping and not putting any weight on it. Feeling a slight inkling of concern for her brother. Did something happen during his battle training. Honeypaw left her place at the the fresh-kill pile and approached her brother, he acknowledged her with a twitch of his ears, but kept limping forward; towards the apprentice den she assumed.

"How was training?" Honeypaw questioned, trying to start a conversation. Falconpaw didn't seem interested very much.

"It was fine," His voice was low, and somewhat hostile. Honeypaw tensed up slightly, hoping he wasn't mad at her and just tired from training.

"Is your paw okay? You seem to be limping." Honeypaw pointed out, trying to sound as kind as possible.

Falconpaw stopped walking, he turned to look at Honeypaw. His amber eyes sparked with a hint of annoyance, Honeypaw took a subtle set back. "Yeah, it's fine." Falconpaw turned his head and continued walking.

"What happened? Did you sprain it? Pull a claw?" Honeypaw questioned, looking at his paw. She saw no blood or swelling, but he had to be limping for some reason.

Falconpaw let out a sigh. "It's just sore from training, it's fine." His tail twitched with annoyance, but Honeypaw was still concerned.

"If you want I can give you something for it, so it doesn't hurt so much. There's a lot of herbs that help with soreness..." Honeypaw ran through the many herbs that helped with soreness and pain.

"I don't want your herbs!" Falconpaw hiss yanked Honeypaw out of

her herb-filled thoughts. She winced at his tone, her ears falling against her head, Falconpaw's eyes were blazing with anger.

"I uh, I just wanted to help." Honeypaw replied, her mew falling into a whimper. "We used to be so close..."

"Yeah," Falconpaw's mew was as sharp as a thron. "*Used* to, then you decided to waste your life as a medicine cat."

His words felt like claws digging into her heart. "What..? I'm not wasting my life, this is what I wanted to do, Falconpaw."

"We could've trained together, fought together, but no you had to memorize stupid plants!" Falconpaw's claws dug into the earth, Honeypaw took a step back from her brother.

"That's not all medicine cats do!" Honeypaw argued, "And it's not a waste of time! Medicine cats help the Clan."

"Oh what by talking to StarClan?" Falconpaw shook his head. "The leader does that too mousebrain." Honeypaw winced. "Medicine cats are useless unless there is a warrior who needs some help, if all cats learned herbs then we wouldn't even need medicine cats."

"Medicine cats are not useless!" Something snapped in Honeypaw, like a brittle twig and anger rushed into her, a flowing river of rage. "We help and save the lives of warriors!"

"You could've been a warrior, Honeypaw!' Falconpaw shouted, baring his teeth. "The only reason Pebblestep became a medicine cat because she was attacked by that hawk."

"Pebblestep became a medicine cat because she wanted to, just like *I* wanted to!" Honeypaw hissed. "This is my choice and if you don't like it that's too bad for you!" Honeypaw's claws dug into the earth beneath her paws, rage fumed from her pelt, how dare he say that medicine cats were useless! How dare he say she was wasting her life! "When your ego gets you in trouble, and you're dying from a battle wound...you won't think medicine cats are so useless when we save your life!" Honeypaw lashed her tail. "At least I'll be a good medicine cat, you'll just be a reckless warrior!" Honeypaw turned

away from Falconpaw before he had a chance to respond and sprinted across camp to the medicine cat den, skidding to a stop when she made it inside. Honeypaw panted heavily, not from the running; but from the outburst of anger.

Honeypaw had never felt that kind of anger before, her fur stood on ends and her claws were sore from digging into the ground. Honeypaw sat down with a huff, dropping her head and her ears falling.

"Is everything okay..?" Snakewhisker asked, concern in his mew. "You ran in here like there was a fox on your tail." Honeypaw lifted her head slightly, she had forgotten about Snakewhisker in her rage, his eyes were gentle and confused.

"I just got into a fight with Falconpaw." Honeypaw mewed quietly, staring at her paws. Regret clogged her chest like rain-filled storm clouds. She didn't mean what she said, she was just upset. "He told me that medicine cats were useless and that I was throwing my life away by becoming one."

Snakewhisker shifted in his nest. "You don't believe do you?" He questioned. "Are you questioning your choice?"

Honeypaw looked up. "Not at all!" She sighed and relaxed slightly. "I love being a medicine cat, I know it's what I'm meant to be." Honeypaw shifted her paws. "It just really hurt, my own brother thinks I'm useless. We used to be close when we were kits but then something changed..."

"If I had a guess..." Snakewhisker said, Honeypaw looked up at him. His gaze questioning. "It's when he got in trouble for running off to Jagged Rocks?" Honeypaw thought for a moment, pulling out that day from the back of her mind. "And it didn't get any better when he fought that AshClan apprentice and got in trouble while you got to help in the medicine cat den."

Honeypaw lowered her head. "I guess that's why he hates me..." She closed her eyes, pain gripping at her heart. "I never should've stayed with Pebblestep that day."

"Honeypaw, I am by no means saying this is your fault." Snakewhisker's tone grew serious, Honeypaw looked up. "Falconpaw shouldn't hold onto those issues for that long, and he especially shouldn't say that about medicine cats let alone his sister. Medicine cats will save his life time and time again, and I hope when he grows up that he will see that. He will see that." Snakewhisker brushed his tail over Honeypaw's ears. "Besides, if you hadn't worked with Pebblestep that day you may not be a medicine cat now, and I wouldn't have anyone to talk to."

Snakewhisker's touched Honeypaw, she looked up at him gratefully. "Thank you, Snakewhisker." Honeypaw let out a sigh, trying to expel some of the painful thoughts and feelings clogging her chest. Honeypaw loved her brother, but she couldn't let his ignorance prevent her from following her destiny.

Chapter 13

The air was brisk, and somewhat chilly. Honeypaw stepped outside of the medicine cat den, looking up at the sky. The sky was pale, with darker clouds covering the sun. Honeypaw looked around, the trees shimmering with drops of rain, falling into the forest floor. It must have rained the night before while the Clan slept. Honeypaw was somewhat grateful for the rain, the weather had been rather hot lately, and Honeypaw enjoyed this calm, morning chill. Honeypaw turned back into the medicine cat den where Pebblestep was doing a bit of cleaning, sweeping up herb scraps with her tail and organizing balls of moss.

Honeypaw let out a yawn, her sleep had been uneasy the night before. Her fight with Falconpaw clawed her mind and her heart, preventing her from sleeping peacefully. Even after her conversation with Snakewhisker, Honeypaw couldn't shake the pain of knowing her brother thought she was useless. It clung to her like burrs, unable to claw it away while it poked and dug into her skin. Honeypaw wasn't sure what she would do now, things were certainly going to be awkward between her and Falconpaw, she hadn't left the medicine cat den since the night before. After she was sure that Falconpaw was gone, she did get prey for her and Snakewhisker but remained in the medicine den for the rest of the night.

"Are you alright, Honeypaw?" Pebblestep's voice caused Honeypaw to jump. "You're normally wide awake in the morning. I heard you tossing and turning in your nest last night." Honeypaw felt Snakewhisker looking at her, she hadn't told anyone else about hers and Falconpaw's fight, and she didn't want to. Snakewhisker told her that she should, but she didn't want to cause any more problems.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Honeypaw's tail twitched. "I just had a belly ache last night." She lied, guilt instantly clouding her when Pebblestep gave her a questioning look.

"You could've taken something for it, you live in the medicine cat den." Pebblestep mewed. "I wouldn't have minded, you're allowed to have herbs as well."

Honeypaw shook her head. "It's fine, It's gone now and I didn't want to wake you and Snakewhisker." Honeypaw turned back to her nest, tidying up the moss around it.

"Well next time, take something for it." Pebblestep brushed up against Honeypaw slightly. "I need you awake and focused, last thing I need is you mistaking borage for yarrow." Pebblestep's voice was light, and somewhat joking, but Honeypaw could sense a hint of worry in her mew.

"I will," Honeypaw promised, lifting her head higher. She hated lying to Pebblestep, she hated lying in general but knew that Pebblestep would talk to Falconpaw about what he said, and that was the last thing their relationship needed.

"Good." Pebblestep looked at her herb store. "I'm going out for herbs," She replied. "I'm not sure how long this rain will last, I want to prepare for the worst." Pebblestep turned her blue gaze to Honeypaw. "You'll be alright here with Snakewhisker?"

Snakewhisker yawned, stretching out his forelegs. "We'll be fine, Pebblestep. We always are, she takes good care of me." Pebblestep's eyes glittered, she dipped her head and exited the den. Honeypaw sat down in her next, dropping her head low. "You should've told her about what Falconpaw said, she can help you."

"Falconpaw hates me enough as it is right now, I don't want to cause anymore problems between us." Honeypaw replied.

Snakewhisker sighed. "I'm assuming you won't want to tell Dawnstar or Lionclaw either?"

Honeypaw looked up. "No, I don't. Telling our parents would be even worse." She replied. "You're the only one who needs to know right now."

"You can't let Falconpaw think this is okay, Honeypaw."

Snakewhisker mewed, concerned.

"If--if it doesn't get better..." Honeypaw lowered her head. "I'll tell my parents." She said quietly.

"I hope you're not lying to me." Snakewhisker mewed. "I don't want you and your brother to be fighting constantly, sibling relationships are important. You've seen how close Pebblestep is with Cinderflame and Yarrowtail, or your mother with Turtleblaze and even Earthpaw and Mudpaw. Siblings are important, Stormwind and Flowerstar were incredibly close."

"Did you have any siblings?" Honeypaw questioned, not sure if Snakewhisker's siblings had passed or not.

Snakewhisker shook his head. "No, I was a single kit. Rare, but it happens." He looked up, his green eyes getting nostalgic. "However, Rustpelt and his brother Barkclaw were like brothers to me. We were born very close together and we remaind friends for as long as both Barkclaw and Rustpelt were alive for."

Honeypaw laid down her in nest. "You've lost a lot of cats in your life, haven't you?" She questioned, feeling a pang of empathy for Snakewhisker.

Snakewhisker nodded. "That is true, but so have many warriors. The hardest deaths were definitely my mate and my daughter."

Honeypaw tilted her head. "You had a daughter?" Honeypaw had never heard of Snakewhisker's daughter, only his son Adderstrike.

"Dovetail," Snakewhisker nodded. "Pebblestep, Cinderflame and Yarrowtail's mother." He explained.

Honeypaw's eyes widened. "You're Pebblestep's grandfather? I had no idea!" There was a lot she didn't know about her Clan!

Snakewhisker let out a light laugh. "Yeah, though you couldn't tell. She treats me just as a normal patient, not because she doesn't like me but because she doesn't want to show any special treatment."

Honeypaw thought about that, her grandparents all in StarClan

now, but would she show special treatment to Lionclaw, Dawnstar or Falconpaw if they were injured? Or even Turtleblaze, Fawnheart, Mudpaw and Earthpaw? They were all her family, she would like to think she would treat them the same she would treat a cat who wasn't family, like Snowtail or Rainears. Honeypaw wanted to change the subject away from loss, so she looked at Snakewhisker who seemed to be lost in his own thoughts.

"Why is Pebblestep so concerned about the rain? It's just a light drizzle out there." Honeypaw questioned, pulling Snakewhisker back to the real world.

"A while back there was a long period of rain, it caused a lot of flooding and killed a lot of herbs. Hunting was hard, and it destroyed the old apprentice den. That's why the apprentice den is outside of camp." Snakewhisker explained. "She's just taking precautions."

Honeypaw knew where the old apprentice den was, she just didn't know how it was destroyed. She tried to imagine that much rain, flooding the rivers but she just couldn't form the image in her mind, especially in this light of a storm.

Honeypaw heard pawsteps and looked over her shoulder to see Pebblestep returning to the den, a bundle of herbs in her jaws. Honeypaw watched as she set them in the store and then turned to her apprentice. "Honeypaw, would you mind grabbing some moss from the moss hollow? I'd like to get some before it gets too soaked."

Honeypaw nodded, slowly standing up. Honeypaw approached the entrance, peering outside. There was no sign of Falconpaw, maybe he was already out hunting. She hoped he wasn't out getting moss.. Honeypaw took a step outside and quickly; yet trying not to draw too much attention to herself, made her way to the back of camp and out the back entrance. Honeypaw padded through the forest, the lush flora of the forest brushed against her pelt leaving water droplets behind on her gold and white pelt. Honeypaw enjoyed the chill of the water, it slightly relaxed her nerves about everything that happened.

Honeypaw approached the moss hollow and peered into it, there was a cat at the bottom but much to her relief, it wasn't Falconpaw. Instead Earthpaw stood in the hollow, collecting moss silently. Honeypaw stepped down the incline into the hollow. "Hi, Earthpaw." Honeypaw greeted quietly. Earthpaw looked over her shoulder, her green eyes sparkling.

"Hey there, Honeypaw." Earthpaw purred. "How are you?" She questioned with a light tone in her mew.

"Oh," Honeypaw walked towards the moss covered walls of the hollow. "I'm alright." Honeypaw replied, lying once again. She began clawing the moss off the stone walls.

"You sure about that?" Earthpaw questioned, Honeypaw could feel her eyes gazing into her pelt. She stiffened, not taking her eyes off the moss.

"Of course." Honeypaw mewed, forming a ball of moss at her paws.

"Honeypaw, I'm not as stupid as I look." Earthpaw mewed, Honeypaw couldn't help but turn to look at her. "I know something's up, just like I know when something's bothering Mudpaw. We're kin, so tell me what's going on."

Honeypaw's ears dropped. "I got into a fight with Falconpaw." She admitted, nudging the moss balls with her paws.

"Siblings fight all the time, Honeypaw." Earthpaw mewed, resting her tail along Honeypaw's shoulders. "I get into arguments with Mudpaw every other day."

Honeypaw stood up, turning away from Earthpaw. "This is different, Earthpaw." Honeypaw lowered her head. "Falconpaw hates me, he told me that I was wasting my time by becoming a medicine cat."

"Falconpaw is an idiot." Earthpaw followed Honeypaw, standing beside her. "He thinks he knows everything, he hasn't been an apprentice for a full moon yet and he think he knows everything there is to be a warrior. I don't where he got that mouse-brained

idea but he won't keep it forever. One day he will wake-up and things will get better, I promise." Earthpaw nuzzled Honeypaw.

Honeypaw looked at Earthpaw, her green eyes soft and caring. "Thank you, Earthpaw." She lifted her head, looking up at the dreary sky. Perhaps Earthpaw was right, maybe one day Falconpaw would realize that medicine cats weren't what he thought they were. He would realize that they do help, Honeypaw just wished it wouldn't happen when his life was in danger, she just wanted her brother to be her friend.

"And if he doesn't change his mind--" Earthpaw nudged Honeypaw, causing her to slightly lose her balance. "Then I'll claw some sense into him." Mischief sparkled in her eyes and she slashed her claws at some lose moss. Honeypaw couldn't help but let out a purr of amusement at Earthpaw. The two of them sat, collected moss and continued a conversation. Earthpaw talked about being a warrior apprentice and Honeypaw told her what it was like being a medicine cat apprentice.

Honeypaw enjoyed talking to her, the only cats she ever really talked to these days were Pebblestep, Snakewhisker, the kits and the elders. She enjoyed Earthpaw's company, but she truly did wish she could talk like this to Falconpaw.

Chapter 14

"Are you ready for tonight?" Pebblestep questioned as she secured a new cobweb wrapping on Snakewhisker's leg while he enjoyed a mouse. Honeypaw, who was stacking balls of mouse turned to her mentor, somewhat confused.

"What's tonight?" She ran through her mind, trying to figure out what Pebblestep meant? It wasn't the half-moon, was it?

Pebblestep let out an amused purr, starting to clean up the herb scraps. "Tonight's the Gathering, did you forget?" Honeypaw suddenly remembered, tonight was the full moon and it was the Gathering!

Honeypaw's pelt grew hot, she shuffled her paws and looked up Pebblestep in embarrassment. "I suppose I did." So much had been on her mind lately that she completely forgot about the gathering as well how excited she had been for it. Her fight with Falconpaw had never left her thoughts, even after her conversations with Snakewhisker and Earthpaw.

"Don't beat yourself up, Honeypaw." Pebblestep purred. "It happens, you won't get in any trouble for forgetting about the gathering? Do you still want to go?"

Honeypaw nodded. "Of course I do! It just slipped my mind." She really did want to go to the gathering. She would get to see the other medicine cats again, as well meet the other three leaders and several other cats from the other Clans! She was so excited, she couldn't believe she forgot about. "I've wanted to go the gathering since I became an apprentice."

Pebblestep gave a soft nod and turned to the herb store. "Well, we'll be leaving in a little bit. Make sure you get something to eat before then, gathering's are long. They're a great learning experience, however." Honeypaw nodded, turning out of the medicine cat, she hadn't eaten all day and she *was* rather hungry. As Honeypaw made

her way to the fresh-kill pile from the den, she spotted Falconpaw returning with Cherryleaf from the forest. Honeypaw tensed, but kept walking. Completely avoiding Falconpaw's gaze, she grabbed her piece of prey and sat beside the drinking pool, not far from the medicine cat den. She would eat in there, but she knew Pebblestep would ask why.

Honeypaw stared at her squirrel and began slowing eating it. "We need to talk about the gathering tonight." Her ears perked up as she heard Cherryleaf's voice, Honeypaw couldn't help but look up. Cherryleaf was talking to Falconpaw, but Falconpaw's back was to Honeypaw so he couldn't see her. "I'm allowing you to go tonight, but I was heavily leaning towards not letting you." She could hear Falconpaw let out a groan. "Listen to me, Falconpaw. A gathering is a time of truce, if you try and start any fights with any cat from the other Clans, if you speak while the leader's are talking or if you try anything else stupid you will not be going to another gathering for a very long time, do you understand?"

"Yeah, I understand." Falconpaw's tone was incredibly annoyed and hostile. "What if someone picks a fight with me?" His tail twitched.

"No one will pick a fight with you, and even if they do, you leave it as is. If they want to break the truce that's up to them but my apprentice will not be the mouse-brained idiot at the gathering tonight." Cherryleaf's tone was incredibly strict, Honeypaw knew Falconpaw was hard headed but she didn't think he was that bad. Then again, she hadn't been involved in his life very much and after what he said about her and medicine cats, she wouldn't put it past him. Cherryleaf stepped away from Falconpaw, Honeypaw looked back down at her prey to avoid Falconpaw's gaze the best she could. She heard him sigh, then heard his pawsteps as they walked closer to her. Tensing up more, Honeypaw focused intently on her half eaten squirrel .

Falconpaw reached the fresh-kill pile, just a few tail lengths away from Honeypaw, grabbed his own piece of prey then walked away without a word. Honeypaw felt a slight feeling of relief, followed by a pang of sadness. She shouldn't have to be so tense around her own brother. Honeypaw finished her prey, discarded the remains and returned to the medicine cat den where she didn't have to face her

brother.

When she stepped inside the den Pebblestep was talking to Snakewhisker, she had a leaf in front of him with poppy seeds littered across it. "If you're pain gets too bad, feel free to take some poppy seeds, they'll be right here where you can reach them. Earthpaw is staying home from the gathering tonight and she offered to come and keep you company or get you anything you need. If you're awake, I'll change your herb dressings when we get back, if not it can wait until morning." Pebblestep listed of a number of things to Snakewhisker, Honeypaw wondered what it would be like for Snakewhisker with both medicine cats leaving for the night.

"Thank you so much, Pebblestep." Snakewhisker purred. "You're a fantastic medicine cat." Pebblestep purred in response.

"It's what I was trained to do." Pebblestep mewed, then turned to face Honeypaw. "It's almost time to go, are you ready?" Honeypaw nodded, she was incredibly excited to meet new cats and experience the other Clans. "Then we should meet up with the others leaving. Most cats come during greenleaf so it's a big group to travel with." With a final goodbye to Snakewhisker, the two medicine cats exited the den and Honeypaw noticed the Clan was starting to gather near the entrance. Falconpaw was standing beside Cherryleaf, looked as annoyed as ever. Honeypaw stuck to Pebblestep who made her way to Dawnstar and Cinderflame. Honeypaw realized that as a medicine cat she would be up by the leaders instead of in the normal crowd of warriors, she grew slightly anxious.

"Are you excited for your first gathering, Honeypaw?" Dawnstar asked, her eyes gentle.

Honeypaw nodded. "Incredibly so." She replied to her mother with a purr. Lionclaw approached them, flicking his tail over Honeypaw's ear playfully, he faced Dawnstar and Cinderflame.

"Are we ready to leave?" Dawnstar questioned, the surrounding cats nodded in agreement and Dawnstar led her Clan out of the camp. Honeypaw's feet itched with excitement with each step they took. Despite her nerves, she loved meeting new cats and she would be

meeting so many! SunClan moved together through their territory having quiet side conversations. There was one that stood out to Honeypaw, however.

"Are you going to question Riverstar about AshClan's behavior lately?" Cinderflame questioned Dawnstar.

"I don't think I will," Dawnstar replied. "They never said anything about attacking our camp at the last gathering, so unless Riverstar or her warriors decide to start some trouble I'll hold my tongue."

"And if this weird behavior continues?" Cinderflame asked.

"AshClan is probably just trying to show they are strong, until they cross the border no action will be taken." Dawnstar's tone was sturdy. What weird behavior was AshClan showing? She didn't go on patrols so she wouldn't know, she would ask a warrior sometime later, but now didn't seem like the best time to bring it up.

SunClan reached the river that lead into the neutral territory of the gathering hollow. Honeypaw watched carefully as the warriors before crossed before her. There were a series of stepping stones that Dawnstar crossed with confident. Honeypaw took a deep breath as it became her turn to cross. She jumped over a river, surely she could cross one with stones right?

Placing one paw in front of her, Honeypaw stepped on one of the stones. It felt sturdy and safe, but she was still cautions as she moved across them. Though it felt like forever, Honeypaw reached the other side and let out a breath of relief.

"Good job." Pebblestep whispered in her ear with a happy purr lining her mew. Honeypaw felt a calming sensation from her mew. She watched as the rest of the Clan crossed the stones, Falconpaw was one of the last cats to cross. As he padded across the stones, Honeypaw couldn't help but notice a slight hint of fear written across his face, Honeypaw felt a slight feeling of relief, knowing that even Falconpaw got nervous crossing the river. When the final cat crossed, Dawnstar led her Clan forward.

It wasn't long before the hollow came into sight, it was incredibly

large. Four huge tree stood tall against the back on the hollow, bigger than Honeypaw had ever seen. In the hollow was a large group of cats, scents of all kinds wafted around Honeypaw. As they grew closer, the sounds of conversation filled the air. SunClan walked down an incline into the hollow and Honeypaw saw so many cats of different sizes and colors. Honeypaw was amazed at the amount of cats she saw.

The cats of SunClan began to break off into their own groups, talking to cats of the other Clans, but she couldn't help but noticed some of the cats were giving SunClan strange looks. They made Honeypaw nervous. "I'll show you were the medicine cats sit." Pebblestep's voice caused Honeypaw to jump slightly, she had been so focused on the cats around her. Honeypaw nodded and she followed her mentor through the hollow. They were also walking with CInderflame, Dawnstar had gone somewhere else, after looking around a moment she spotted Dawnstar at the top of the hollow along with a black tom and a blue-gray she-cat each sitting in their own trees. Dawnstar jumped into another tree, next to the blue-gray she-cat. She greeted both of the she-cats, but the blue-gray cat didn't seem too keen on responding.

"Are those the other leaders?" Honeypaw asked Pebblestep who looked up at the tree as well.

"Yes, that's Shadowstar and Riverstar of MoonClan and AshClan, LichenClan must not be here yet; LichenClan's leader is Jaggedstar." Honeypaw nodded and they reached the bases of the trees where several cats sat. A dark gray tom was talking to a fluffy white she-cat, Cinderflame approached them but the dark gray tom didn't give her a second glance. The she-cat greeted her kindly, however.

"Something got your tail, Ashblaze?" Cinderflame questioned with a half-joking mew. The dark gray tom, Ashblaze, shot her a glare.

"Yeah, it's you, Cinderflame." He growled, he didn't sound joking at all, Honeypaw's ears went down slightly.

"Why so hostile, Ashblaze?" The white she-cat asked with slight laughter. "That's so *unlike* you."

"Mind your own business, Feathercloud." Ashblaze hissed. Honeypaw leaned into close to Pebblestep.

"What's his problem?" She asked quietly so he wouldn't hear her.

Pebblestep shrugged. "All of AshClan seems to be rather hostile tonight, who knows what's crawling under their pelts." Honeypaw looked away, spotting Ravenheart, Onepaw, Skyfeather and Blackpaw taking amongst themselves.

"Pebblestep! Honeypaw!" Ravenheart called eagerly and welcoming, Onepaw looked happy to seem them as well. Skyfeather didn't look angry and neither did Blackpaw, well not any more angry than he did the last time she saw him. "Welcome, did you have an easy trip?" Ravenheart questioned.

"Yeah, it went smoothly." Pebblestep replied, dipping her head to the other medicine cats. "I could do without the hate filled gazes from AshClan, though." She gave Skyfeather a questioning glance. The AshClan medicine cat leaned away.

"I'm not sure what is up with my Clan, Riverstar hasn't said anything to me." Skyfeather replied.

Pebblestep shook her head, then Honeypaw noticed Ravenheart looking straight at her. "So, how's your first gathering so far?" He questioned.

"Oh," Honeypaw shuffled her paws. "It's good so far, I've been excited for it for a while now." She replied.

"Gatherings are one of my favorite times." Ravenheart mewed. "When the Clans get together in peace and can talk with their friends."

Honeypaw's heart felt lighter at Ravenheart's comment, that's truly what a Gathering was all about." Pebblestep moved to sit beside Ravenheart and Skyfeather as they began to have their own conversations, even Onepaw joining in from time to time. Honeypaw looked at Blackpaw who was sitting quietly by himself, Honeypaw wanted to try and strike up a conversation with him.

"Hi." She said kindly, it took a moment before Blackpaw actually looked up at her, his blue eyes confused.

"Hi?" Blackpaw replied, shuffling his paws slightly. "Do you need something?" He questioned.

Feeling somewhat awkward, Honeypaw shook her head. "I just wanted to talk to you." She answered, slowly sitting down.

"About what?" Blackpaw didn't seem too keen on talking to her, but Honeypaw tried her best to keep their conversation going.

"I don't know..." She scanned her mind for any topics. "Is this your first gathering?" She questioned.

Blackpaw shook his head. "My second, actually." He looked at his paws, was he not interested in continuing the conversation or could he just not think of anything to talk about?

"Other than the medicine cats, do you know any cats from other Clans?" She questioned, interested if he had any friends.

"Not really. Blackpaw's tail twitched. "Although I did meet a SunClan cat a while ago," He stopped for a moment. "No offense to you our SunClan or anything, but he was quite the arrogant furball."

Honeypaw let out a slight laugh, she had an idea of who he was talking about. "That cat wouldn't happen to be a golden brown tabby would it?" Blackpaw nodded. "Yeah, that was my brother. He's got quite the ego."

Blackpaw looked confused. "*That* was your brother? Doesn't seem to be anything like you."

Honeypaw chuckled slightly. "Yeah, he's a bit more...brash and definitely arrogant."

Blackpaw nodded. "He almost got my sister in trouble for fighting a kit, but she didn't know he was a kit at the time."

"Your sister? Well, he wasn't supposed to be out. He ran off and thought he could fight AshClan at five moons old."

Blackpaw rolled his eyes. "Sounds like a smart cat." His ears twitched. "Well, my sister's name is Nightpaw. She's around here somewhere, probably talking to some other apprentices."

"My brother, Falconpaw, is here too. Hopefully they don't run into each other." Honeypaw laughed.

Blackpaw's eyes showed amusement for the first time since they started talking. "Let's hope not, I don't think that would go too well."

Honeypaw looked around the Gathering. "Is a lot of AshClan here tonight? You and Skyfeather are the only ones I've ever met."

Blackpaw nodded. "Over there is my father. He's talking to Cloverstrike and Featherfall." He motioned towards a gray tom with black paws talking with a brown tabby she-cat and a silver tabby tom."

Honeypaw nodded. "Where is your mother? Is she here tonight?" Honeypaw noticed that Blackpaw instantly tensed, he looked away. Did she say something wrong?

"Uh, no." He said quietly. "My mother--my mother is gone." His voice dropped, guilt swarmed Honeypaw.

"Oh, I'm so sorry Blackpaw, I don't know." Honeypaw dropped her head, feeling incredibly stupid.

"Don't," Blackpaw turned back to face her. "It's alright." He let out a slight sigh. "You couldn't have known, I'm not that upset." Honeypaw looked back at him, his gaze wasn't sad or even angry. She felt slightly better, but before she could say anything else she noticed Roseheart walking up to the other medicine cats.

"About time LichenClan showed up." Skyfeather mewed. "What was the hold up?" He questioned Roseheart.

"Sorry." Roseheart replied. "We just were a bit late leaving, but we're here now and we're not that late."

"Now that LichenClan has arrived," Honeypaw heard Riverstar

talking above her head, she looked up to see that an elderly looking brown tom had joined the other leaders, that must be Jaggedstar. "We can finally start."

"Since we made everyone wait," Jaggedstar spoke up. "I'll go first so we can get this started." None of the other leader's argued. "We don't have much news other than Leafwhisker has moved to the nursery expecting kits very soon." There was pleasant talk among the Clans and Jaggedstar sat back down on his branch.

"If the others wouldn't mind, I would like to go next." Dawnstar was the next to speak. "We've got a few things to announce." Jaggedstar and Shadowstar nodded, Riverstar didn't respond, so Dawnstar went ahead. "First of all, we welcome two new apprentices to SunClan, my own kits Falconpaw and Honeypaw, and Honeypaw has chosen to be the new medicine cat apprentice."

"Falconpaw! Honeypaw!" The Clans cheered loudly, Honeypaw lowered her head as she felt so many eyes bore into her pelt. She didn't realize they would announce her like that! When the cheers died down, she slowly lifted her head back up.

"Next, Goldenleaf had her two kits Burnkit and Hollykit. To conclude, SunClan is strong and healthy." Dawnstar dipped her head, a warm feeling spread through Honeypaw. SunClan really was strong!

"Riverstar would you like to go next?" Shadowstar kindly suggested, without giving a nod or any kind of acknowledgement, Riverstar stood up.

"AshClan doesn't have much to say, but we do have an announcement." Riverstar spoke, her voice seemingly louder than the other leaders. Honeypaw felt Blackpaw tense beside her.

"SunClan has too much of a hold over AshClan." Her voice grew even louder, there were murmurs of confusion from all the Clans except for AshClan.

"What in the name of StarClan are you talking about, Riverstar?" Dawnstar demanded, tilted her head in confusion.

"Ever since the battle, SunClan has been so full of themselves just because Dawnstar was the one to stop Thornstar." Riverstar accused.

"That has never been the case, Riverstar." Dawnstar mewed, annoyance very audible in her mew. "You're spouting nonsense."

"You all think AshClan is weak because we were taken over and we lost many warriors, but AshClan is as strong as the rest of you! Stronger even!" Riverstar's claws were digging into the branch below her paws.

"Riverstar, none of us have thought that." Jaggedstar spoke. "We all know AshClan is strong."

"Tell that to SunClan! Testing the borders every single day, that's why we've made out scent stronger."

"That's not even true!" Honeypaw heard a call from the crowd and spotted Lionclaw on his paws, yelling towards Riverstar. "SunClan respects our borders!"

"I don't believe that for a second!" Ashblaze hissed back at Lionclaw. "SunClan have never cared about borders.

"Enough!" Dawnstar hissed. "Riverstar, you're talking nonsense, SunClan haven't crossed any borders and none of the Clans think AshClan is weak. Stop this before you break the truce."

"AshClan will not listen to SunClan ever again! We may have followed you in the battle, but AshClan is strong and we will do anything to prove it! Even if that means taking territory from SunClan!"

Chapter 15

Falconpaw's claws ripped into the earth beneath his paws, he flattened his ears and bared his teeth. "Is Riverstar a idiot? She really think she can take territory from SunClan?"

"Hush, Falconpaw!" Cherryleaf hissed, swiping her paw over his ear. Falconpaw ducked his head and turned to glare at her. "This is not your place to speak!"

Falconpaw lashed his tail. "What do you mean it's not my place to speak? This is my Clan they're threatening!"

"You're out of place to speak, Falconpaw. Now sit down and keep your mouth shut, this is not your matter to deal with right now. Dawnstar is our leader, you are just an apprentice. Sit. Down."

Falconpaw sat down, his claws still digging into the ground. *Just* an apprentice? He would be a warrior someday! His word meant just as much as hers or any other warrior's! He lowered his head, letting out a low growl.

"If you are threatening SunClan, Riverstar..." Dawnstar continued speaking. "You are making a serious mistake." Falconpaw looked up at his mother. "SunClan will not back down to AshClan, if you try and invade our territory then we will fight back and any blood that is spilled will be on your paws." Dawnstar stood up on her branch. "SunClan will not stay here any longer, if AshClan want's to flaunt their ignorance and threaten SunClan, we will not stay here and listen to her mouse-brained ramblings."

"Coward!' Riverstar spat.

Dawnstar shook her head. "I figured you wanted to change AshClan, Riverstar...but it appears to me that AshClan will always be battle hungry, but SunClan will defend against you and your warriors. Invade SunClan at your own risk, hopefully some of your warriors are competent enough to not follow your lead." Dawnstar jumped

down off her branch. "SunClan, we are leaving!" She announced and the SunClan warriors began to rise.

Falconpaw stood up with Cherryleaf, he noticed some cats were glaring at him, others looked awkward and avoided SunClan's gaze. He assumed they were from LichenClan or MoonClan, and the idiots glaring at them were AshClan.

"Put your claws away." Cherryleaf hissed into Falconpaw's ear. "Just because AshClan started an argument doesn't mean the truce can be broken, we talked about this." Falconpaw sheathed his claws reluctantly, what he wouldn't give to claw the smug looks of AshClan's faces. He shook his head and walked beside his leader.

He spotted Honeypaw sticking close to Pebblestep, her head was low and she looked to be nervous and scared. Falconpaw snorted, if she would've trained as a warrior she wouldn't have a reason to be scared! Falconpaw looked away from her, focusing on his Clan as they left the gathering hollow. He could hear conversations between his Clanmates, angry and annoyed.

"Riverstar is a bigger idiot than Echoheart if she thinks she can invade SunClan, so much for being different than her." Rainears growled to Crowfur.

"We sheltered Riverstar when Thornstar took over AshClan, and we fought beside her so she could actually have a Clan to lead!" Adderstrike hissed to Snowtail.

"Riverstar is just trying to prove she's strong," Sandfoot mewed. "Yes, she's going about it in the wrong way but she wants to show that she nor her Clan are dependant on us. She's an idiot, yes, but I understand why she's doing this."

"That doesn't mean it's okay." Bramblepelt mewed. "I'd rather not fight AshClan, but we need to be prepared just in case."

"I will discuss with some warriors what to do." Dawnstar replied. "But just because Riverstar said they will take our territory, doesn't mean she will follow through. We will prepare for a fight, but we will not initiate it."

"Are we going to enforce the border more?" Cinderflame questioned. "We can't just ignore this threat."

"Yes, we will make the borders stronger." Dawnstar answered her deputy. "I always want double the patrol around the AshClan border. Until they back off, they shall remain in place." Falconpaw looked at the forest floor. He was ready to fight, he would send AshClan running back into their own territory with their tails tucked between their legs! He wondered if Falconclaw would give him even more training...

He listened to the conversations all the way back to camp, when he got back he felt exhaustion weighing over him. He was definitely ready to get some sleep, he just hoped that AshClan didn't attack while SunClan slept, that would be a low move on their part. Falconpaw headed to the apprentice den and fell into his nest, ready to sleep the rest of the night away.

Unfortunately, he was not alone in his dreams, when Falconpaw woke into the strange forest he couldn't help but let out a groan. He was tired, he loved the training but even he needed his rest.

"I hope you're not upset to see me." Falconclaw mewed as he entered into view, the shadows seeming to slip off his pelt. His amber eyes were sparkly mischievously, and his tail twitching behind him.

"Of course not." Falconpaw lied, keeping his head high. He would never show that he was tired to Falconclaw.

"I hope no," Falconclaw flicked his tail over Falconpaw's ears. "I saw the gathering, you need all the training you can get."

"Can you see if AshClan is going to invade?" Falconpaw questioned, unsheathing his claws at the thought of battle.

"Any idiot could see that AshClan is itching for a battle, it's the only thing they're good for. AshClan are notoriously stupid. From Goldenstar to Ivystar to Lionstar to Riverstar, they're all incredibly stupid. They may want fights but they never win them, I've seen them all fall to their own ignorance in battle. Something that I will

not let happen to you, my young apprentice."

Falconpaw looked Falconclaw in the eyes, they glimmered with ferocity and determination. "You'll be the greatest warrior of your time, I promise. I see potential burning inside of you; brighter than the fiercest fire."

Falconpaw could feel the blaze Falconclaw was speaking of, it swelled inside him. Falconpaw dug his claws into the earth below him. He bared his teeth. "So are we going to sit around talking or start training?"

Falconpaw's balance was knocked off and he hit the ground, he looked up only to see Falconclaw lashing towards him again. Falconpaw rolled away and jumped to his paws, avoiding the warrior's attack. Falconpaw barely had a moment to catch his breath before Falconclaw was attacking again, but he knew this routine. He should never let his guard down, it was the biggest mistake a warrior could ever make.

Falconpaw avoiding his attack, and lunged forward himself. He slipped under Falconclaw, the warrior was much larger than he was but he could use his small stature to his advantage. Falconpaw pushed up, his spine digging into Falconclaw's stomach. Falconclaw let out a hiss and his paws lost their balance on the ground. Falconpaw spun around after getting out from under the warrior, and lashed out. His paws hit Falconclaw's flank and Falconclaw spun around, his paw knocking Falconpaw's legs out from under him. Falconpaw hit the ground, the air left his lungs and he felt a burning in his ear as Falconclaw attacked again.

Falconpaw looked up in shock, he could feel a dampness to his ears. Falconclaw had used his claws! "Why did you do that?"

"Because, Falconpaw." Falconclaw looked down at him. "Real warriors don't keep their claws sheathed, it works for young apprentices but you're old enough and trained enough to use your claws now. I never want you to hold anything back!"

Ignoring the sting in his ear, Falconpaw jumped forward. Unsheathing his claws as he met Falconclaw's body in the air, it felt

strange to use his claws during training, but it also felt right. His claws dug into Falconclaw's pelt, and he was thrown from the warrior. Falconpaw stuck his landing, and stared his mentor head on as he moved to attack. Falconpaw slipped out of the way and dashed around to rake his claws down Falconclaw's pelt. Dark red blood welled at the wounds, and Falconclaw spun around to shove Falconpaw to the ground.

Falconpaw was pinned, he struggled under Falconclaw's grip but eventually forced his way out, he let out heavy pants but readied himself to fight again. "That's enough for tonight." Falconclaw dipped his head. "You're shaping up nicely, Falconpaw, but there's still much training to be had. Be prepared for AshClan, and don't hold anything back."

"Falconpaw!" Falconpaw twitched in his sleep, the murky forest slowing fading into nothing. He forced his eyes open and saw Earthpaw and Mudpaw looking down at him, concern and confusion in their green eyes. Falconpaw sat him, his muscles aching and his ear still stinging.

"What gives? Back off." He growled as he shook his pelt free of stray moss. "What are you staring at?" He glared at the two of them.

"Were you fighting foxes in your sleep?" Mudpaw questioned. "I've never seen a cat wake up with a torn ear before."

Falconpaw flattened his ears, wincing slightly. "I don't know, I had bad dream." He had woken up sore before, but he had no idea real injures would follow him into the real world. Falconpaw let out a sigh. "I don't know what happened, probably a thorn or something."

Earthpaw and Mudpaw shared a glance, neither of them seemed to be believing him. "Well, you should go to Pebblestep, you don't want an infection."

Falconpaw stood up, lashing his tail. "It's fine, It doesn't even hurt." He pushed past the two of them without another word and stepped outside the apprentice den. The sun was just below sunhigh, and the air was warm. He let out a sigh and began the short walk to camp. He wasn't going to see Pebblestep, Honeypaw was the last cat

he wanted to see right now, the last cat he ever wanted to see.

Keeping his head low, and his tail twitching in annoyance Falconpaw entered the camp and ran directly into Pebblestep. She looked up in alarm, her blue eyes going straight to his ear. "What happened? Mudpaw attack you?"

Falconpaw lashed his tail. "No. There was a thorn in my nest." He growled. "It's not a big deal."

Pebblestep narrowed her eyes. "Whether that's true or not," She sniffed the wound, Falconpaw ducked his head. She rolled her eyes. "Come with me so I can make sure it doesn't get infected, it won't take but a heartbeat."

Falconpaw's claws scraped at the ground, he knew that Pebblestep wouldn't let him go, so he just had to suck it up and follow her. "Where's Honeypaw?" He questioned, trying to hide the growl in his throat. Honeypaw must have not told Pebblestep about their fight, or he wouldn't be hearing the end of it from Pebblestep, or his parents for that matter.

"She's out right now, collecting herbs by the MoonClan border. You'll have to catch her another time." Pebblestep explained, she clearly had no idea they weren't getting along. Then again, they never did. Falconpaw didn't respond, he just gave a nod. Falconpaw and Pebblestep entered the medicine cat den, inside was the overwhelming scent of herbs and Snakewhisker resting lazily in a nest.

When Falconpaw entered, Snakewhisker lifted his head and gave Falconpaw a strange look. Falconpaw felt uncomfortable by his gaze, and tried to avoid it. What was his problem? "Training incident?" He questioned, staring at the tear in Falconpaw's ear.

"No, a thorn in his nest." Pebblestep mewed, a slight purr in her tone. "Never seen such a fierce thorn before, have you?"

Snakewhisker chuckled. "No, didn't know they could attack cats in their sleep." Falconpaw lashed his tail and faced the old warrior.

"I turn a lot in my sleep, okay?" He hissed and his claws scraped at the stone.

"Keep your claws in, apprentice." Snakewhisker laughed slightly. "You better watch that temper. You could end up getting into a fight with a cat you care about, whether you think so or not."

Falconpaw's gaze shot to Snakewhisker, the gray warrior had a smug look on his face, but his eyes were serious and somewhat dark. Honeypaw must have told him, but why him? What did he mean to her at all? Falconpaw tore his gaze away from Snakewhisker and looked at Pebblestep. "Are those herbs ready yet?" He demanded.

"Calm down, Falconpaw." Pebblestep turned from what seemed to be her herb store with some plants her mouth. After a moment of chewing up a golden flower, she rubbed it on his ear. It stung and he let out a slight hiss, annoyed at every time happening around him.

"There we go," Pebblestep mewed. "Come back to me if it still hurts or starts to feel hot, okay?"

"Yeah, okay." Falconpaw grumbled and turned to leave only to come face to face with his sister. Honeypaw's green eyes were wide, she clearly hadn't expected to see him. She quickly looked away and brushed past him, Falconpaw dropped his head and stalked out of the den without speaking to Honeypaw. He got as far away from the medicine den as quickly as possible, he stopped when he saw Cherryleaf. He just wanted to start training, get his mind off everything else.

"What happened to you?" Cherryleaf questioned as Falconpaw approached her, he twitched his tail in annoyance.

"A thorn in my nest, Pebblestep took care of it." He growled, and spoke before she could talk again. "Can we go out and train now?"

"We're actually going on a patrol, now. Need to check up on that AshClan border as much as possible."

Falconpaw lifted his head, a border patrol sounded perfect to him. Maybe they would run into some AshClan fleapelts! "Who are we going with?" Cherryleaf stood up and motioned towards a group of cats, he saw Rainears, Snowtail, Briarrose and Cloudspots. "Seems bigger than usual."

"Well, if AshClan starts any trouble we want to make sure we aren't overwhelmed." Cherryleaf explained as they approached their patrol. Rainears looked at Falconpaw, and thankfully didn't ask about his ear, none of them did.

"Are we ready?" Rainears questioned. "I'd like to get there as soon as possible." She mewed, a sense of urgency in her mew.

"Something wrong?" Briarrose questioned. "Was their signs of AshClan during Cinderflame's dawn patrol?"

"Call it age," Rainears's tail twitched. "I just have a bad feeling."

"Then we should leave now." Snowtail mewed. "Set our minds at peace for a while." The rest of the patrol agreed and they left the camp. Falconpaw's claws itched for a fight, ever since his training last night; he really wanted to show his skills in a real fight. He would amaze the entire Clan!

"I'm worried that AshClan will attack during the times we're not patrolling." Snowtail mewed to Rainears.

"That's why we are constantly checking it, to prevent that from happening. Also, Dawnstar has the Clan protected. There's always strong and able warriors in the camp at all times, AshClan won't succeed in invading our territory. They'll have to take it from our cold, dead claws before we give it to them."

Falconpaw felt a surge of admiration for Rainears, she was clearly brave and a fierce warrior. They *were* kin after all. They neared the border, Falconpaw could smell the rank scent of AshClan growing near. Then he noticed his surroundings weren't correct, they weren't at the border yet.

"AshClan's in our territory!" He shouted. "I can smell them!" He

looked around for any AshClan warriors in sight. The rest of the patrol stopped dead in their tracks as well.

"He's right." Cloudspots mewed. "They've already started to invade." He unsheathed his claws. "We need to find them, and warn the Clan."

"Briarrose, you're the swiftest of us. Run back to camp and warn the rest of the Clan, we're going to find these scoundrels and try and hold them back." Rainears commanded, Briarrose didn't hesitate before she vanished into the forest, when she was gone Rainears lifted her head higher. "Stick together, try and track down the AshClan warriors."

Falconpaw breathed in the air, the scent of AshClan was here but it was somewhat faint, they had to be close but they didn't pass them on the way from camp. "This way." Cloudspots mewed. "The scent is stronger over here." The rest of the patrol followed Cloudspots as he led them somewhat away from the camp, closer to the gathering hollow river.

"Looking for us?" The patrol didn't have any time to react as a brown tabby tackled Cloudspots, the two cats rolled on the ground before Cloudspots jumped to his paws and faced the she-cat. Out of the undergrowth several AshClan cats stepped into view, they incredibly outnumbered the SunClan patrol, it must have been half the Clan! He couldn't see Riverstar anywhere.

"AshClan!" Rainears spat. "You really think you can take territory from SunClan? I thought you were smarter than that, Cloverstrike?" The brown tabby, Cloverstrike stepped forward.

"I thought you would be smarter to bring a bigger patrol to defend your territory, Rainears. This will be as easy as catching a dead mouse." Cloverstrike sneered.

"Figures that AshClan eats crowfood." Falconpaw sneered in return, lashing his tail. "You're too stupid to catch live prey."

"A sassy little apprentice." Cloverstrike questioned. "Why don't you-" Falconpaw saw his chance and took it. *Never give your an enemy a*

chance to strike! Falconpaw lunged towards Cloverstrike, slashing his claws across her chest. She stumbled backwards clumsily, showing a look a surprise for a moment. "AshClan, attack!" Cloverstrike went straight to Falconpaw, her claws outstretched and razor sharp. Falconpaw twisted out of the way, avoiding her dangerous claws. "You're a smart one, but still so stupid at the same time!"

Chapter 16

Cloverstrike's size was much larger than his own, her legs were longer and she managed to trip him up. Falconpaw stumbled and landed on his side, his belly exposed to the AshClan warrior. Before she could move, Falconpaw saw a flash a color as Cherryleaf tackled Cloverstrike to the ground.

"Too scared to fight a warrior that you pick on an apprentice, Cloverstrike?" Cherryleaf spat as raked her claws along Cloverstrike's haunches. The AshClan she-cat let out a hiss of pain and lashed out at Cherryleaf.

"I'm a lot braver than you!" Cloverstrike lunged on top of Cherryleaf, knocking the tortishell to the ground. Falconpaw scurried to his paws then sprang on top of Cloverstrike's back, digging all of his claws into her spine. Cloverstrike arched her back and reared on her hind legs, letting out a screech. She fell backwards, on top of Falconpaw. He let out a huff of pain and then shoved her off. Cloverstrike struggled to stand up again, as he watched her, Falconpaw felt teeth in his scruff as he was thrown across the forest floor, rocks digging into his pelt. He looked up and saw that a large gray tom had joined in the fight, he was clawing at Cherryleaf who avoided his claws with nimble movements.

Falconpaw hurried back into the battle, bracing himself to impact with the large gray tom. He was about the size of Falconclaw, so he slipped under the warrior and caused him to lose his balance as he had done with Falconclaw the night before. The tom hit the ground hard, and let out a hiss as his paws lashed out at Falconpaw. Falconpaw stepped back, but tripped and stumbled into Cloverstrike who met him with her claws in his pelt. He felt his fur tear and he pulled away, striking at her with his own claws.

Cloverstrike avoided him, and attacked again. He once again felt her claws in his pelt, he hissed and battered at her with his hind legs, he sunk his teeth into her foreleg. Cloverstrike hissed and tore away from him. Falconpaw gave chase, the brown tabby had many

scratches and her pelt was ruffled and bloody.

"Leave her, Falconpaw!" Cherryleaf called, and Falconpaw stopped and turned. Cherryleaf was wrestling with the gray tom once again, but there was a lot more going on. Snowtail's white pelt was stained with dirt and blood as she fought a gray tabby tom and a dark-gray she-cat at the same time. Cloudspots looked exhausted as he fended off two warriors himself. Rainears threw a ginger tabby she-cat to the ground, but she bled heavily from a wound on her shoulder. As she stepped back from the ginger tabby, she was tackled by a brown tom.

Falconpaw himself was feeling sore and battered, there were too many of them! He clawed the ground, he refused to give up! Falconpaw dashed forward, his claws ripping into the gray tom's pelt. He was instantly thrown off and struggled to regain his balance. He felt blood welling in a wound above his eye and his breathing was rough and heavy, despite all of this...Falconpaw had never felt more alive!

"SunClan! Attack!" Falconpaw spun around and saw more SunClan warriors swarming through the forest led by Dawnstar and Cinderflame. Suddenly, the battle was much more in SunClan's favor! The gray tom was pulled off of Cherryleaf by Crowfur. Applespots and Redclaw crashed into two more AshClan warriors, and Falconpaw spotted his father fighting with the AshClan deputy, Ashblaze, but where was Riverstar?

Falconpaw shook away the thoughts, it was not a time to think. It was a time to fight! Falconpaw broke into the battle now that Cherryleaf was safe, he needed a new cat to fight. He spotted Earthpaw wrestling with a familiar cat, it was the first AshClan apprentice he had met! Baring his teeth and claws, Falconpaw tackled the black apprentice. They rolled over each other in a tangle of claws.

When they broke apart the she-cat faced him with bared teeth. "It's you! The stupid kit!" She sneered.

"I'm not a kit anymore," Falconpaw growled. If he could make a full grown warrior run off, he could fight a stupid apprentice! He

tackled the she-cat, digging his claws into her black pelt and raking across her flesh. She hissed and returned his attack, he felt her claws in his pelt and suffered through the pain. He sank his teeth into her shoulder as hard as he could, her blood welling around his muzzle. His vision turned red and clawed harder into her pelt. Falconpaw's red haze was stopped when he was thrown violently off the apprentice. He tumbled away and stood up, his entire body shaking.

The apprentice was bleeding heavily and a brown tom was helping her to her paws. "Nightpaw are you okay?" He questioned. "You should go back to your brother, he'll help you back to camp."

The apprentice, Nightpaw, nodded and limped away from the battle. Victory flooded through his body, he couldn't even feel his wounds! Falconpaw had gotten his revenge, but there was much more to fight! He looked around, and spotted his mother. They met gazes and she seemed to be staring at him shock. She must have been amazed at how he was fighting.

"Falconpaw, are you okay? You...you're covered in blood." Dawnstar questioned, she only had a few bleeding wounds on her body. Was he? Falconpaw nodded.

"I'm fine, I'm perfect to keep fighting!" Falconpaw assured his mother. Dawnstar gave a slow, uncertain nod.

"Just, be safe... " She turned and ran back into the battle. Falconpaw needed to do that himself, he dug his claws into the ground and looked for another fight! The next scene he saw a light brown tom pinning down Bramblepelt. Blood was pouring from a wound in Bramblepelt's side, he didn't look good. Falconpaw ran forward, throwing himself against the AshClan warrior, knocking him away from Bramblepelt. The tabby SunClan warrior, slowly stood up, he was incredibly unsteady.

Falconpaw clawed at the brown AshClan warrior so he couldn't go back towards Bramblepelt, he spotted Cinderflame shoving away a silver and white tabby she-cat. "Cinderflame! Bramblepelt's hurt bad!"

The deputy looked towards Falconpaw, Bramblepelt and the AshClan warrior. Cinderflame ran over to them, slashed her claws at AshClan's warrior's face, causing him to back off as blood trickled into his eyes.

"Bramblepelt!" She shouted. "Can you stand up?" Bramblepelt nodded slowly and stood up, his legs shaking and threatening to give out on him. "I'm going to take you back to camp, Falconpaw, be safe!" Bramblepelt put his weight on Cinderflame's body and they limped away to safety. As he turned back to the battle he saw Dawnstar towering over Ashblaze.

"Your leader was too much of a coward to show her face here! Leave, AshClan, leave and leave knowing you cannot take from SunClan! Tell Riverstar that she's a coward and you better stay out of SunClan territory!"

"This isn't over, Dawnstar..." Ashblaze stood up. "AshClan, retreat!" The AshClan warriors turned and ran into the forest, back to their own territory. What had once been an area filled with screeches and yowling was now eerily quiet.

"SunClan, you've all fought well. Time to return to camp and care for our wounded, those who are hurt the most go see the medicine cats immediately, myself and a few others will see to it that AshClan have left."

"I want to go!" Falconpaw stepped forward, but Cherryleaf stopped him.

"You've done enough, Falconpaw. I'm so proud of you, let's go back to camp. Your fight is over for now." Falconpaw felt like arguing, but Cherryleaf's praise meant a lot to him. He nodded and followed his Clan back to camp.

Once in camp, there was several cats visiting Pebblestep and Honeypaw. Falconpaw felt his own wounds begin to sting and sore, his muscles ached and his entire body felt bruised but he knew his wounds weren't dire. Falconpaw sat down and began to clean the blood from his fur and his wounds.

He heard pawsteps and saw Lionclaw approaching him, his father's pelt was only slightly stained and he had a few scratches across his flank but his gaze was bright. "I saw your fighting, Falconpaw." Lionclaw's eyes glowed. "I'm so proud of you, you fought like a true warrior. You're incredibly brave."

Falconpaw held his head high, his father's praise warming his heart. "Thank you, it felt right--fighting for my Clan."

Lionclaw dipped his head. "You'll be a strong warrior someday, I know it." He licked his son's shoulder. "Take care of your wounds, and help your Clanmates if they need." Lionclaw turned away to talk to Cinderflame who had returned, Falconpaw's heart dropped as he saw the large blood stain on her pelt, where Bramblepelt had been. Was he okay? Was Bramblepelt alive?

Falconpaw stood up and approached the medicine cat den, inside Honeypaw was working frantically on patching a bleeding wound on Redclaw's chest and Pebblestep seemed to be completely focused on Bramblepelt. Even Snakewhisker was helping with herbs and the not as severe wounds. Falconpaw sighed and turned away, he couldn't help but feel an inkling of fear for Bramblepelt. He was a strong warrior, he shouldn't die!

Falconpaw walked away from the medicine cat den, Dawnstar and her small patrol had returned from seeing that AshClan had left. Dawnstar touched noses with Lionclaw for a brief moment before taking her spot on the SunTree, there was no need to call the meeting, almost all of SunClan had gathered already.

"This battle has been incredibly rough," Dawnstar announced, her voice echoing throughout the hollow. "It hurts me to see my Clan is such a state, but we won this fight. AshClan knows that they can't take us so easily. Please see to your wounds, and get some rest. Tomorrow we will restore the border and go from there, I want you to know that I'm incredibly proud of each and every one of you." Dawnstar jumped down and Falconpaw could feel pride swelling inside him, he had fought for his Clan and he had fought hard. He wondered if Falconclaw was proud of him.

SunClan stuck together, cleaning each other's wounds. He noticed in

particular that Heatherflight, Flamepetal, Brackenpelt and Fawnheart were staying close together. He remembered that Bramblepelt was their father, and that their mother had died in the battle against Thornstar. They were all scared, Falconpaw couldn't imagine what losing one of his parents would feel like. He dug his claws into the ground *I'll never let that happen, I'll defend my parents until the day I die.* He took a deep breath. *What about Honeypaw?* A voice mewed in the back of his head, taking Falconpaw by surprise.

Honeypaw? She was a medicine cat, she didn't need protecting! She was always safe in the medicine cat den. *Not always...* Falconpaw shook his head, trying to get rid of the thought. He didn't want to think about it.

"Falconpaw." He looked up, glad to be pulled away from his thoughts. Cherryleaf approached him. "Great job, today. I've already told you this, but I'm very proud of you. You've proven to be incredibly brave and strong, you're on the path to becoming an incredible warrior. I want you to take a break from training for a little bit, not for long just enough to rest your wounds. You've fought well."

Falconpaw didn't like the thought of not training, but exhausting was weighing him down. His body hurt and he just wanted to sleep, but he wanted to make sure the Clan was okay first, he couldn't ever let his Clan down.

The moon was high and SunClan was silent, the wounded cats were sleeping off their wounds and their pain. The fight had been long, and Falconpaw was incredibly grateful to be sleeping in his nest once again. Without a thought, he fell asleep and instantly woke up in the forest. He really, *really* didn't want to train tonight, he dropped his head.

"Do not worry, Falconpaw." Falconclaw mewed. "We're not training," Relief flowed into Falconpaw's blood. "I wanted to congratulate you on your victory. You fought like a true warrior, I could see the fury in your eyes as you taught that apprentice a lesson. You've left a few scars tonight, my apprentice. AshClan won't be forgetting about you any time soon."

Falconpaw lifted his head high, Falconclaw's praise meant so much to him. "I'm going to let you rest your wounds for a while, but we will return to training soon. Just because you won this battle doesn't mean you've won the war. AshClan will return, and you will be ready."

Falconpaw nodded. "Thank you for training me."

Falconclaw's tail twitched and his amber eyes burned fiercely.. "It's my absolute pleasure."

Chapter 17

The moon was high in the sky, Honeypaw felt exhausting weighing over her. Snakewhisker had fallen asleep and so had the other cats now staying with them. The battle had brought a lot of wounds, the worst were staying with Honeypaw and Pebblestep. Those cats were Redclaw with a deep wound on his shoulder, Rosewind with several deep wounds and Turtleblaze who wasn't as bad as the others, but Pebblestep feared infection. He argued, but eventually agreed to stay. However, the worst of them scared Honeypaw. Bramblepelt hadn't woken up since Cinderflame dragged him to camp, heavily bleeding from his side and stomach.

Pebblestep was hard at work trying to stop his bleeding while Honeypaw worked on the others, with Snakewhisker's help as well. Ever after the others had been safely treated, Bramblepelt was still at risk. Pebblestep was constantly changing his wound dressing, each time the cobweb was covered in his blood. Honeypaw could feel her's mentor's stress, and Honeypaw was stressed as well. She did everything she could to help Pebblestep, getting her more herbs and cobwebs. Honeypaw's paws were stained with blood as were Pebblestep's. Bramblepelt was still, but his pelt was slowly falling and rising. He was alive, for now.

Honeypaw sat beside her mentor, watching his chest closely. Scared that at any moment it would stop. "Honeypaw," Pebblestep spoke quietly. "We've done what we can for tonight." Honeypaw turned to look at her mentor. "I think the bleeding has stopped, but there's nothing else we can do. It's up to StarClan now, and we need our sleep."

Honeypaw stepped forward. "Are you sure? I can stay up..."

"No." Pebblestep rested her tail on Honeypaw's shoulder. "You're exhausted, I can see it in your eyes." Honeypaw saw the same exhaustion that Pebblestep described in her own blue eyes. "When we wake up, we can care for him further."

Honeypaw nodded, she couldn't argue the fact that she was incredibly tired. She let out a sigh and trudged over to her nest. She watched Pebblestep forge a makeshift nest closer to Bramblepelt, to watch over him while he slept is what Honeypaw assumed. Honeypaw didn't think she would be able to sleep, the stress of Bramblepelt was weighing down on her like a boulder. She lowered her head into her nest, surprised she was unable to fight off sleep. As Honeypaw's mind faded into a dream, one thought flowed through her worn mind: *Please don't take Bramblepelt, StarClan...*

Despite falling asleep quickly, Honeypaw's sleep was incredibly restless. When she woke up, it felt like she hadn't slept at all. She lifted her sore neck from her nest and saw that Pebblestep was sitting next to Bramblepelt, wide awake. The medicine cat's head was low, her body almost lifeless. Honeypaw rose, fear crippling her heart. She looked over Bramblepelt's body, his chest wasn't moving. Her heart froze, Honeypaw stared harder. Maybe it was just faint...maybe...

"Honeypaw." Honeypaw jumped and turned to see Snakewhisker, his eyes were dull and full of grief.

"No," Honeypaw mewed, her voice barely a whisper. She padded over to Bramblepelt, Pebblestep lifted her head.

"I'm sorry, Honeypaw." The two medicine cats locked gazes. "We did everything we could, but Bramblepelt's wound was too great. He died in his sleep."

"No!" Honeypaw shouted. "This-this shouldn't happen!" He mind was swirling with so many thoughts. "We're medicine cats, we-we're supposed to prevent this from happening!" She stumbled backwards, her mind and her heart felt like they were crumbling into dust.

"Honeypaw, we can't save every cat. It was Bramblepelt's--"

"No!" Honeypaw cut off Pebblestep. "We worked so hard...we fought so hard to save him! This isn't fair!"

"Honeypaw," Turtleblaze spoke next, his voice somber. "Cats die, it happens. Bramblepelt is safe and happy in StarClan now."

"Loss is part of being a warrior, even of being a medicine cat. No one will blame you for Bramblepelt's death." Redclaw added.

I blame me! Honeypaw shook her head, closing her eyes tightly. *If I was a better medicine cat, if I would've just stayed up!*

"Honeypaw, please don't do this to yourself. It's not mine or your faults," Pebblestep stepped closer, Honeypaw felt something inside her snap.

"Just, *stop!*" Honeypaw tore away from her mentor and sprinted out of the medicine cat den, she sped through the camp out the back entrance. Her mind was a whirlpool of thoughts and fears. *I never should've let this happen! It's not fair! It's not fair!* Honeypaw skidded to a stop, she was deep in the forest, nearing Jagged Rocks.

"Maybe Falconpaw was right..." Honeypaw choked out the words, speaking to no one around her. Speaking to StarClan, maybe? She sat down, her energy completely drained from her body. "Maybe I am useless..."

"Honeypaw!" Honeypaw heard her name being called, she didn't have the energy to run away, she didn't have the energy to do anything. She expected Pebblestep to come after her, but instead it was Dawnstar. Her mother's eyes were bursting with concern, she stood by her daughter. Honeypaw wanted to wail like a kit, she fell against her mother's pelt.

"I couldn't save him," She whimpered. "I'm a failure as a medicine cat!" Dawnstar wrapped her tail around Honeypaw, she felt utterly useless.

"You're not a failure as a medicine cat." Dawnstar mewed, her purr was as soft as honey and heather. "Death is a natural part of Clan life, Bramblepelt knows you did everything you could and know he's safe in StarClan. You know he is, you've seen StarClan yourself."

Honeypaw looked up at her mother, her green gaze comforting her. She felt like she was safe back in the nursery again, Honeypaw closed her eyes. She felt so lost, she tried to picture StarClan but the

image was shattering in her mind.

"Pebblestep's own mother died while she was kitting, under Pebblestep's care." Dawnstar said, her voice low and sad. Honeypaw looked up in shock.

"What? When did this happen?" Honeypaw had never heard of that, she knew that Pebblestep's mother had died giving birth to Cloudspots but she didn't know that it was Pebblestep who cared for her.

"Back when Pebblestep was still an apprentice under Poppyfur's mentorship. Poppyfur was out of camp and Dovetail was giving birth. Dovetail had always had complications with kits. Her very first kit died, and her second litter died as well. Pebblestep, Cinderflame and Yarrowtail were the first kits to survive. When Dovetail was expecting again, she had a lot more hope. Only, this time it was worse. Dovetail gave birth to three kits, Cloudkit and two others that were born dead. The birth was too much for Dovetail and she died, Pebblestep blamed herself so much. No matter what we told her." Dawnstar looked down at her. "Do you think it was Pebblestep's fault that Dovetail died?"

"Of course not!" Honeypaw mewed urgently. "Dovetail couldn't be helped if she had such a rough time having kits, it couldn't be helped--" Honeypaw cut herself off as she realized what Dawnstar was trying to convey. She lowered her head. "How can I deal with this? How can I be a medicine cat if it bothers me this bad?"

"Honeypaw," Dawnstar pressed even closer to her daughter. "Death with never be easy, there will always be a cat that's left behind, there will always be pain. However, you have to accept the fact that you did everything you could, and Bramblepelt knows it. I know what it feels like to feel the guilt you are feeling, but I know for a fact that Bramblepelt will not be angry or upset, it was his time to join StarClan and now he can be with his parents, his brother and his mate again. He can watch over his kits, watch them grow and he can watch over his Clan."

Honeypaw looked up, sadness gripping her head. "What if the rest of the Clan balmes me as well?"

"They won't." Dawnstar touched her muzzle to Honeypaw forehead. "They will understand, just as Pebblestep does and just as myself and your father and brother do." The mention of Falconpaw made Honeypaw wince, Falconpaw would blame her for this. He said that medicine cats were useless. "Honeypaw, what's wrong?" Honeypaw stared at the ground, shuffling her paws, with great pain; she answered.

"Falconpaw won't understand..." She whimpered. "Falconpaw and I...we got into a fight and he told me that medicine cats were useless, and it feels like he was right about me being useless at least..."

"Falconpaw said that?" Dawnstar's voice faltered slightly. She cleared her throat. "I will talk to Falconpaw about this, Honeypaw. What he said is not true, medicine cats are incredibly important to the Clan and I don't *ever* to believe any cat that says you are useless. You are doing an incredible job and I'm so proud of you." Dawnstar touched her muzzle to Honeypaw. "I couldn't ask for a better daughter."

Honeypaw's heart felt somewhat lighter, she felt close and safe with her mother. "Thank you." The words came out as whisper but she knew her mother could hear her. Honeypaw and Dawnstar stood up.

"Let's go back to camp, we need to send Bramblepelt off." Dawnstar mewed. "And you need your rest." Honeypaw's heart felt heavy once more at the mention of Bramblepelt, but she gave a small nod and followed Dawnstar back to camp. Once inside she could feel the sorrow like thick fog around the camp. News of Bramblepelt's death had clearly spread. Honeypaw and Dawnstar found themselves greeted by Fawnheart, Honeypaw felt her mother stiffen.

"Honeypaw..." Fawnheart's tone was sad, and pained. "Thank you so much for everything you did for my father, I know he's safe in StarClan now and I want you to know that all of us are grateful to you and Pebblestep for doing your best, and if it wasn't for you two Turtleblaze might be with my father as well. So thank you," Fawnheart nuzzled Honeypaw then turned to Dawnstar and gave a nod.

"Thank you, Fawnheart." Honeypaw dipped her head, for some reason; the pale brown she-cat's words had touched Honeypaw's heart. Fawnheart nodded and returned to her younger siblings.

"Go to the medicine cat den, I'm going to find your brother and talk to him." Dawnstar nuzzled Honeypaw once more before padding off in a separate direction. With her head low, Honeypaw entered the medicine cat den again. When she stepped inside she looked up at Pebblestep who working with Bramblepelt's body.

"I'm sorry, Pebblestep." She mewed quietly. "I shouldn't of acted like that..." She hung her head low in shame.

"No, Honeypaw." Pebblestep's voice cracked. "I shouldn't have expected you to feel any other way. I know how it feels to blame yourself and I didn't teach you the pain of losing a patient. How could I?" He lowered her head, her blue eyes dark. "I'm your mentor and I should've been more supportive, but know this: a death will never be mine or your faults, we cannot save every cat and it's not easy but we have to accept it."

"I know." Honeypaw mewed quietly. "And I've kind of accepted this, I just...I just don't want this to happen again. I know it will, but I'm going to try my best to not let it happen and if it does, I'll just have to try harder."

Pebblestep looked up, her gaze slightly lighter. "As medicine cats...that's the best we can truly hope for."

The moon was high in the sky, and it was time for Bramblepelt's silent vigil, the Clan had gathered around his body which was centered in camp. Fawnheart, Flamepetal, Heatherflight and Brackpelt had joined together, their heads lowered for their father. Pebblestep had let Turtleblaze leave the medicine cat den to be with his mate, Earthpaw and Mudpaw had joined them as well. Rainears and Crowfur were together, pressing close together. "There's only two of us left, out of five..." She had heard Crowfur mew earlier, a sentence that had pained Honeypaw, but she wouldn't let it tear her apart again.

Honeypaw sat beside Bramblepelt's body, looked down at him. It

looked at if it was sleeping, and she really wished he was. Honeypaw closed her eyes as she remained by his body. She could feel the sadness she felt before, mixing with a feeling of relief. She knew that being a medicine cat was going to be hard, she knew that cats would die even if she tried her absolute best to protect them, but she also knew that she had an entire Clan to fall back on. She knew they would always support her no matter what, she had two parents who loved and a mentor who she could look to for anything. Honeypaw knew, deep down inside that everything, that she would be okay.

Chapter 18

Falconpaw rose from his nest, muscles sore and wounds stinging. He licked the worst, a set of claw marks down his side. Not deep, but enough to be painful and annoying. Falconpaw stood up, Mudpaw and Earthpaw were already out. He stretched and shook his pelt, his sleep was incredibly restful. He enjoyed the break from his night trainings, which had been replaced of exciting dreams of battle. Defending his Clan against any opposers. Feeling ready for a new day, Falconpaw stepped outside. He wondered if his Clanmates felt the same way but when he stepped into camp he realized this was not the case. He could feel despair and sadness in the air like fog. What was wrong with everyone?

He spotted Fawnheart with her siblings, all their heads low and that's when realization swept over him. He padded quickly over to Cherryleaf, who also had a dark look in her eyes. "Cherryleaf, what happened? Did Bramblepelt..?"

Cherryleaf gave a sad nod. "Yes, Falconpaw. Bramblepelt died in his sleep last night, there was no saving him. His wounds were too great."

"Falconpaw." Falconpaw heard his mother's voice, but it was calming or soothing. He turned and saw a serious look in her eyes. Had he done something wrong?

"Yeah?" He looked up at her, he had a bad feeling in his chest. "Do you need something?"

"We need to talk. Come with me to my den." Dawnstar turned without saying another word, Falconpaw looked around nervously but followed her. Normally this situation didn't turn out too well. What did he do?

They reached Dawnstar's den and she sat down in her nest, Falconpaw also sat down. "What's wrong? Did I do something wrong?"

Dawnstar let out a small sigh. "Falconpaw, I talked with your sister just now." Falconpaw tensed. *Oh, she finally told you did she?* He restrained himself from grumbling or clawing at the ground. "And I have to say, I have no idea what the idiotic idea ever crossed your mind." Falconpaw flattened his ears, her tone was sharp as a thorn, her eyes sparked with anger. "You think medicine cats are useless, do you? You think that our Clan would be better off without them? Think of all the cats that would've died without medicine cats yesterday!" Falconpaw winced at her tone. "It is incredibly saddening, that you think that way. Do you blame your sister for Bramblepelt's death?"

Falconpaw's whole body tensed. "N-No.." He didn't think it was her fault...his wounds were too bad, didn't he think that? "It was AshClan's fault."

"Well your sister thinks it's her fault. She thinks that you think that *she* is useless because of what you said." Dawnstar's tone was getting angrier, Falconpaw wished he could run away. "What you said seriously hurt your sister and I can't bring myself to believe that you said it."

"I-I didn't mean that she was useless!" Falconpaw tried to argue, he felt as if he was losing any control of this argument.

"You said medicine cats were useless, Falconpaw!" Dawnstar spat, Falconpaw looked down, hiding himself from her gaze. "To think of yourself higher than your fellow Clan cat, whether it's a medicine cat, apprentice, kit or elder is incredibly foolish. This Clan is not just warriors who can fight, it's apprentices who train, it's kits who bring us joy and hope, it's elders who teach us what we need to know, it's deputies who keep the Clan running smoothly, it's leaders who guide, it's medicine cats who heal us!" Falconpaw felt as small as a mouse, he had never seen his mother so angry, he wanted to run away. "I can promise you one thing, Falconpaw. If you can't ever learn that...then not as your mother, but as your leader; I will make sure you never become a warrior until you do."

Falconpaw looked up in shock. "You can't do that to me!" He stood up, staring his mother down. He didn't feel angry, he felt hurt that she would say that.

"Yes I can." Dawnstar stood up as well and faced him. "Listen to me, Falconpaw. You're my son, and I love you more than anything in the world, but you need to learn these lessons. You will not be a good warrior if you don't respect the rest of your Clan, and the sooner you learn that; the better."

Falconpaw dropped his head, he couldn't argue with her. He felt so many emotions boiling inside him, she couldn't stop him from being a warrior! He was a great fighter and hunter! Nothing else mattered! "Falconpaw." Dawnstar stepped closer. "I wish I didn't have to have this conversation with you, but it had to be done. Siblings are incredibly important, it's good to have that bond. When you need help, Honeypaw can be there for you if you just let her, and in turn you can be there for you. I bet she would've liked a brother to talk to right now, a brave cat who could tell her that it's not her fault that Bramblepelt died, that he fought bravely, but she doesn't have that. If you don't fix this soon, you may not have a sister to rely on."

Falconpaw looked up, he felt defeated. He felt like he had just fought an intense battle and lost. "I-I'll talk to Honeypaw...I'll apologize..."
"It's going to take more than that," Dawnstar mewed. "But, it's a start. You may go now, Falconpaw."

Falconpaw, keeping his head low, turned and left his mother's den. He stepped outside and looked towards the medicine cat den. He couldn't see Pebblestep or Honeypaw, they were probably preparing for Bramblepelt's vigil. He sighed, perhaps he would talk to Honeypaw when they weren't so busy.

Cherryleaf had picked the worst day to not train Falconpaw, he wanted nothing more than to leave camp. He was avoiding his parents and his sister as much as he could, luckily he hadn't seen much of Honeypaw and when he saw his father or mother he would duck away from them. He had done a lot of thinking while he had been stuck in camp, however. He had found himself questioning the thought "medicine cats are useless". He didn't think they were, did he? They had saved many cat's lives, even if they didn't save Bramblepelt's. Bramblepelt gave his life for his Clan, one of the most respectful and admirable warriors in SunClan. His own kin, it

was part of the warrior code that a cat could die for their Clan. Falconpaw hung his head low, why would Falconclaw tell him that medicine cats were useless? *Why did I believe it?* Falconpaw let out a heavy sigh and glanced up the sky, the sun was starting the fall and the sky started to darken. The vigil would be soon, but Falconpaw didn't think he should go. He figured that Honeypaw would be there and he wasn't ready to talk to her just yet. Falconpaw made his way away from camp to the apprentice den, he didn't know what the Clan would think if he didn't attend, he could just say that he was just too tired or something like that, but he wasn't dealing with it tonight.

Falconpaw woke to the sun shining in his face. He lifted his head slowly and blinked sleep from his eyes. He was surprised that Falconclaw gave him two days in a row free of training, it wasn't like him. Falconpaw's entire night had been silent and dreamless, it didn't make him feel better; but somehow made him feel worse. Falconpaw's conversation with his mother had bothered him, his thoughts had dug under his skin like a tick, one that he couldn't rid of it. Falconpaw glanced over at Earthpaw and Mudpaw who were sleeping soundly in their nests, they had gone to Bramblepelt's vigil and would be probably be sleeping for a while yet. He would be the only apprentice awake, would Honeypaw even be awake?

He knew he needed to talk to her, he just didn't know when or how. He didn't know what he would say to her? Would he just say "I'm sorry" and move on? She was probably still shook up from Bramblepelt's death, and there were still three cats in the medicine cat den, not including Snakewhisker. She would be busy even if she was awake. Falconpaw clawed at his nest, he had never been this nervous before. He would rather face ten adders and all of AshClan by himself then talk to his sister.

Swallowing his fear and pride, Falconpaw stood up and left the den. The walk back to camp felt like it took ages, his thoughts clawing at his mind and heart. He felt like he was drowning, and he couldn't get a breath of fresh-air. Falconpaw lowered his head, trying to relax his breathing before he stepped back into camp. He didn't want his Clanmates wondering why he looked so frightened, especially from something like this. Falconpaw's steps were heavy

and slow, but he continued into the camp.

It felt better today, not as dark but knew that Bramblepelt's death still hung over the Clan like a storm cloud. Falconpaw moved deeper into camp, he couldn't see his mother or father around, nor his sister. He looked towards the medicine cat den and strained his ears to try and hear if anyone was talking. He could make out a few voices, Snakewhisker, Rosewind, Pebblestep...After a few moments and him moving closer, Falconpaw heard the quiet voice of Honeypaw. Taking another deep breath, Falconpaw pushed himself towards the medicine cat den. He looked inside and saw that Pebblestep was applying herbs to Redclaw's shoulder and Honeypaw was treating Rosewind. Turtleblaze was the first to look up, it looked as if his wound had been treated already. "Hello, Falconpaw." He greeted.

Honeypaw visibly tensed and looked up for a moment, only to look back at Rosewind when she spotted Falconpaw. Falconpaw lowered his head slightly. "Are you alright, Falconpaw?" Pebblestep looked at him, her eyes looking over his pelt. "How is your ear? Are any other wounds acting up?"

"Uh, no." Falconpaw shuffled his paws. "I just need to talk to Honeypaw, if she's not too busy."

Honeypaw looked at him, her green eyes going wide. She tilted her head in confusion. "You want to talk to me?" Falconpaw nodded slowly.

"I don't think she's too busy right now, I can finish up on Rosewind. Go talk to your brother." Pebblestep turned back to her patient and seemed to be finishing up on Redclaw. Falconpaw could feel Snakewhisker's eyes on him, he avoided the gray tom's gaze and waited for Honeypaw to make her way slowly to Falconpaw.

"Let's go, I guess." Honeypaw mewed, her voice sounding quiet and somewhat scared. Falconpaw turned from the medicine cat den and looked around for a private place to talk.

"Let's go outside to talk, it should be private." Falconpaw struggled to keep his voice steady, what if Honeypaw didn't forgive him? She

seemed to be pretty upset when they had their fight. Honeypaw just gave a nod and they padded slowly to the camp's entrance, when they were a good ways away from camp, Honeypaw stopped walking.

"What do you want to talk about?" She questioned, sitting down and staring at her paws.

"I-" Falconpaw's voice wouldn't form, he dug his claws into the soil and swallowed his fear once more. "I want to say I'm sorry...for what I said a while back." Honeypaw looked up, her green eyes showing a mixture of shock and confusion. "I didn't mean it...I don't know what I was thinking."

Honeypaw lowered her head again. "It's fine. You were right, about me being useless anyway."

"You're not useless, Honeypaw." Falconpaw's voice grew louder. "I know you're not, and neither is Pebblestep or any other medicine cat. It wasn't your fault that Bramblepelt died, it was AshClan's. If Riverstar wasn't such a mousebrain Bramblepelt wouldn't have died, it's just how things worked out, I guess." Falconpaw stopped his ramblings, he held his tongue and stared at the ground.

"I'm sorry, too." Honeypaw said, her voice even quieter. "I didn't mean the things I said, I never meant to do any of the things I did. When were kits and you ran out of the camp, I should've gone with you, I shouldn't of been in the medicine cat den the first time that AshClan attacked, I should've been with you."

Falconpaw's mind flashed back to those days, facing the adder and Nightpaw. "No, you shouldn't have. I wasn't the smartest kit, I just wanted to prove I was the best, that I was strong. I wanted to be a warrior, it's in my blood. Fighting, hunting, defending, it's all inside of me. I've never felt more alive than when I was fighting for my Clan."

"That's how I feel about being a medicine cat." Falconpaw looked up, he was able to meet his sister's gaze. "From the first day I went into Pebblestep's den, it felt special to me. It felt right, and then helping her when AshClan invaded, it felt so right to me. Ever since

I was named Pebblestep's apprentice, I've felt my life fall into place. I know we could've fought together and trained together, but I wouldn't of been happy. You like protecting the Clan, I like healing the Clan. We're doing the same thing, just in different ways. Warriors protect the Clan and medicine cats heal the warriors We can still work together, we can still be close."

Falconpaw let out a half-chuckle. "I suppose I never thought of it that way." He truly never had, he thought that Honeypaw would be a different level than him at all times. He always thought medicine cats were different than warriors, but they weren't. They were both part of SunClan and they both looked after their Clanmates. Falconpaw looked at his sister, he felt a surge of protection flow through him. Honeypaw wouldn't know how to fight the way he could, if she was in trouble...he would protect her. Just as he would protect any other Clanmate. "I hope you can forgive me, Honeypaw."

Honeypaw's eyes grew softer. "Of course, I can. You're my brother, mouse-brain." Falconpaw felt something he hadn't felt much of before, it felt like warm honey soothing through his veins. He stood up and brushed against his sister.

"I'm glad." Honeypaw and Falconpaw stood up, shared one more friendly glance then continued back into the camp.

Chapter 19

Falconpaw prowled through the forest, stepping incredibly lightly as to not crunch any leaves beneath his paws. With his feint steps, he moved forward, the morning dew drops brushing off of leaves onto his pelt. His amber eyes focused intently on the brown mouse that was getting ready to scurry away from his claws. Taking a deep, yet silent breath; Falconpaw pounced. His paws landed on point, killing the mouse quickly. He held his head high and looked around for Cherryleaf, she wasn't anywhere in sight. Rolling his eyes slightly, he buried his kill and continued the hunt. This wasn't an assessment so why wasn't she around? Must have been checking on Earthpaw or Mudpaw. For the first time, they were training all three apprentices together. Falconpaw enjoyed it, he could show just how much he had learned from Falconclaw.

It had been several days since the battle with AshClan and Bramblepelt's death and SunClan was slowly falling back into a sense of normalcy. Falconpaw's training continued, both with Cherryleaf and Falconclaw. Cherryleaf had gone easy on him for the first few days, but Falconclaw had gone right back into the heart of his training. Falconpaw woke up tired and sore, but better in every way. He had surprised Cherryleaf with his battling skills and now it was time to show off his hunting skills.

Hunting is just like fighting, only your opponent is much weaker and doesn't usually fight back, but your claws and stance mean everything If you give everything that you would give on the battlefield with hunting then you'll never lose your prey. Falconclaw's words stuck in his mind, and he followed Falconclaw's advice as closely as he could. That mouse was his second piece of prey today and it was still early. He was determined to catch more than both Earthpaw and Mudpaw.

Not wanting to waste any time, Falconpaw sniffed the air looking for his next piece of prey. He moved quietly through the forest, keeping his senses sharp. Falconpaw stopped when he heard the quiet flapping of wings, he turned and saw a small robin perched on

the ground, pecking at the ground for it's own food. Little did this bird know, it was going to become SunClan's food. Falconpaw dropped into his crouch, focusing intently on the bird. When Falconpaw was hunting it felt as if the world slowed down around him. His breathing was quiet, and the rest of the forest blurred except for his prey and the ground in front of him. Taking small, quiet steps, he braced himself to jump.

When he made his pounce he crashed into something much larger than a bird, with a lot more fur. Falconpaw and the stranger tumbled together into a tree. All Falconpaw could see was a mass of dark brown fur. Hissing with annoyance Falconpaw shoved away from the cat. He stood up, shaking leaves and twigs from his pelt he looked down at what he had crashed into. Mudpaw was sitting up, shaking his pelt as well.

"You mouse brain!" Falconpaw hissed. "You got in my way! You scared off my prey!" He looked around for the robin, which had vanished from sight.

"Mouse-brain?" Mudpaw's green eyes flashed with annoyance. "That was my prey, Falconpaw."

"I was just getting ready to catch it!" Falconpaw spat, kicking away a stick. He lashed his tail as he faced his fellow apprentice.

"Hold your claws, toms!" Earthpaw pushed her way through the undergrowth with Cherryleaf, Heatherflight and Redclaw at their sides. Redclaw wasn't ready for hunting or border patrolling yet, but he could still watch over Mudpaw's training.

"What happened to you two? Why so angry?" Heatherflight questioned with a hint of amusement in her purr."

"I was stalking a bird and Mudpaw got in my way!" Falconpaw hissed. "I would've caught it if it wasn't for him!"

Mudpaw scoffed. "You were downwind of the bird, you should've scented that I was there."

"You're supposed to be downwind of prey so it doesn't scent you!"

Falconpaw argued. "I was doing the right thing, it would've been a perfect catch!"

"Get over yourself." Mudpaw stuck his nose in the air. Falconpaw's rage bubbled up.

"Why don't you get over *yourself!*" Falconpaw moved to attack, but Cherryleaf stepped in front of him.

"That's quite enough you two." She mewed sternly. "There's no need to get at each other's pelts like this, it's just one bird. There will be plenty more, it's not even leaf-fall yet." Falconpaw let out a snort and looked away from both his mentor and Mudpaw.

"We should head back to camp." Heatherflight suggested. Falconpaw looked at her.

"What? Why? There's still prey to be caught!" Falconpaw protested, his tail twitching. He wanted to catch more prey! Two wasn't nearly enough!

"We're not the first hunting party out tonight, the fresh-kill pile is stocked up high and we have plenty of prey for the whole Clan, we'll do more hunting tonight. Earthpaw caught four, you caught two and Mudpaw caught three, that's plenty." Heatherflight explained, her tone patient.

Falconpaw's heart dropped, he had caught the least amount of prey? His claws dug into the ground and he held back a groan. He didn't argue again as Redclaw led them back through the forest to SunClan's camp, grabbing their prey on the way back. Falconpaw held his prey in his mouth, dragging his paws as he walked. He was annoyed now, two pieces of prey wasn't enough. He wish he could go hunting again, go hunting more. He wanted to keep his claws busy and the day was still early. Battles weren't always a guarantee, but hunting could be done everyday and was just as important.

They reached camp and each of them dropped their prey on the pile, Heatherflight had been right; it was stocked full. Greenleaf had been good for SunClan, but he still wanted to hunt. "Falconpaw, why don't you take some prey to the queens and kits, then you can

eat yourself and relax the rest of the day." Cherryleaf instructed. Falconpaw nodded, even if it was a menial apprentice task; it was something to do.

Falconpaw grabbed two mice for the kits two squirrels for Goldenleaf and Squirreltail. He carried the prey to the nursery where the kits were hard at play, all of them. Sedgekit, Petalkit, Dovekit, Larkkit, Sorrelkit, Pikekit, Honeykit and Burnkit all played together in a large mass of fur. The nursery was incredibly full, and Larkkit and his siblings were going to be apprentices soon, and Sedgekit and her littermates weren't that far behind. Even with the spacious apprentice den, the addition of six more cats would make it incredibly crowded. He hoped he would at least be a warrior by the time Hollykit and Burnkit became apprentices.

"Falconpaw!" The first kit to greet him was Sedgekit, she bounded away from her littermates over to his side. "Is that for us?" Falconpaw nodded and set down the mice for the kits, and gave the squirrels to Squirreltail and Goldenleaf.

"Thank you, Falconpaw." Goldenleaf said kindly.

"Can you tell us about the battle?" Sedgekit asked as she swallowed a piece of her mouse. "Earthpaw and Mudpaw haven't told us yet."

Falconpaw hesitated, looking up at their mothers. Squirreltail wasn't his favorite cat, she wondered if she would want him talking about it.

"It's okay, Falconpaw. You can tell them." Squirreltail gave her approval and continued eating her meal. Falconpaw nodded and turned back to the kits, all of them were at attention now.

"Well, when we first noticed that AshClan invaded our territory it was only me, Snowtail, Rainears, Cherryleaf, Briarrose and Cloudspots." Falconpaw started. "AshClan came out at us, and we were incredibly outnumbered. It was just our patrol against almost the whole Clan!" Sedgekit's eyes went wide, and the others let out noises of shock and awe. "While Cloverstrike was taunting us, I attacked her first. You should never let your guard down when facing an enemy. This started the whole battle, it was just me and

Cloverstrike at first. Then Cherryleaf started helping me out, we fought against her until another cat joined in. He pinned down Cherryleaf and I jumped on his back, pulling him off.

"Then I turned on Cloverstrike again, I got her to run away. However, we were still outnumbered. I was kind of scared, I think we all were. Then, in a flash, the rest of SunClan showed up. We overtook AshClan and it was a full fledged battle! I fought apprentices and warriors. It was so crazy, but of course AshClan couldn't beat SunClan! Dawnstar told their deputy to leave and told him to tell Riverstar that SunClan would never be afraid of AshClan." Falconpaw's heartbeat at started to quicken at his story, as he relived the battle in a tale for these kits.

"SunClan isn't afraid of anything!" Larkkit boasted.

"That was such an amazing story!" Sedgekit's eyes were sparkling. "You must have been so brave, Falconpaw!"

Falconpaw held his head high, these kits were looking at him with such admiration. He felt pride flowing inside of him. "It takes bravery to be a warrior, but your Clanmates will always support you."

"We'll always fight together!" Dovekit stood beside her sisters. "We'll be the best warriors in SunClan!"

Falconpaw chuckled and gave a challenging, yet playful look at the kits. "Well, you'll have to better than me."

"I will be!" Sedgekit puffed out her chest and faced Falconpaw. "When I'm apprentice, I'll be so smart and so powerful that *you'll* be struggling to keep up with *me!"* Falconpaw laughed.

"I'll be looking forward to it." Falconpaw laughed and watched as the kits spoke to each out about being the best warriors they could be.

"Alright, little ones." Squirreltail had finished her prey and was gathering the kits closer. "Thank, Falconpaw for the story, it's time to get some rest."

"But I wanna talk to Falconpaw, more! He has the best stories!" Sedgekit complained with a pout.

"The sooner you get to sleep, the sooner you'll be an apprentice." Falconpaw mewed to her. "And the sooner you can get better than me." Sedgekit turned to see him, her amber eyes sparkling.

Sedgekit and the others agreed to settle into their nests. "Thank you for the story, Falconpaw and thank you for getting her to go to sleep, she's been getting more and more restless." Squirreltail said, her mew was kind.

"She just wants to be a warrior, I know the feeling." Falconpaw replied. He bid farewell the queens and kits and left the nursery. He had spent a bit more time than he expected to there, but he enjoyed it. He was glad to inspire them, especially Sedgekit. She would be a great warrior one day, he laughed to himself, but not better than he would be.

Falconpaw was back in the forest of his dreams, a place so familiar to him. Though, he hadn't explored it, perhaps there wasn't much too it than where he trained. Just an empty, dream forest. Falconclaw showed up soon after Falconpaw did, he entered the same way he always did. Emerging through the trees with shadows falling off his pelt. "Nice to see you again, Falconpaw."

"You too, as always." Falconpaw greeted his shadowy mentor. "What are we going to learn today?"

"Today's lesson will be more intellectual than physical training today. Intelligence can be just as lethal as claws." Falconclaw explained. "Let's talk about the battle, we've haven't discussed it much."

Falconpaw nodded. "What about it?" What was there to talk about? Falconpaw had fought well and SunClan won.

"There's so much to be learned from a single battle," Falconclaw began. "Every action can be analyzed, and thought about. You took on Cloverstrike with your mentor, and you chased her off which was good. Your attack on Nightpaw was also good, that was one of

your best moments."

"Really?" Falconpaw thought about his fight with Nightpaw and realized he didn't remember much about it. He remembered her yowls of pain, and a red fog.

"Yes, that's when your true fighting spirit came out, Falconpaw. You were an unstoppable force at that point. With that spirit you could of taken on multiple warriors and with all the training, you'll be a danger to anyone who stands in your way." Falconclaw started walking in circles around Falconpaw. "I can't wait to see your Clanmates and your enemies reactions when they realize that you're an incredibly strong warrior, stronger than any of them."

Falconpaw looked at Falconclaw. "You really think so? You think I can be that strong?" He questioned, something rising in his chest.

"I won't accept anything but confidence, Falconpaw!" Falconpaw jumped at Falconclaw's sudden shouting. "You either are the best warrior or you aren't, if you don't think you are then you won't be." Falconclaw's pace increased, he was turning circles around Falconpaw. Falconpaw felt a power weighing on his shoulders, an intensity burning from Falconclaw's eyes. "Will you be the best warrior in SunClan?"

The question somehow took Falconpaw by surprise, he tried to stay up straight but Falconclaw was intimidating Falconpaw. "Y-Yes." He didn't mean to sutter, but he couldn't help himself.

Falconclaw stopped walking, his muzzle was dangerously close to Falconpaw's ear. He could feel Falconclaw's hot breath on his fur. "That doesn't sound very confident, Falconpaw."

Falconpaw lifted his head high, this was just a game that Falconclaw was playing. Trying to scare him and intimidate him, he wanted Falconpaw to be braver and more confident. "I will be the best warrior in SunClan." He caught Falconclaw's dangerous, amber eyes. He formed a sneer at his mentor. "I will be the best warrior in the whole forest."

Falconclaw sneered in return, his eyes sparking. Falconpaw

predicted his movements and ducked as Falconclaw slashed with his claws. Falconpaw stepped gracefully backwards and jumped at his mentor; pushing him to the ground. Falconclaw threw him off with a great force, Falconpaw rolled across the forest floor. He jumped to his paws, his heart racing with the heart of battle.

"That's it!" Falconclaw exclaimed, his eyes shining in the dull moonlight, his claws digging into the ground and ripping at the dead earth. "You will be the best warrior this forest has ever seen, nothing will scare you and nothing will stop you! No matter what any other cat says, you'll show them all that you are strong! You are powerful! You are dangerous!"

Excitement, confidence and pride buzzed through Falconpaw's body, like a ferocious lightning storm inside his chest. He *would* be the best, the best anyone had ever seen. He held his head high, waiting for his next battle. Waiting for his next chance to prove how strong he was. Every single training would bring him stronger and closer to his goal. Falconpaw could feel the strength in his claws as they ripped into the forest floor, he was only an apprentice, but he could see the day he became a warrior; they day he became a danger to any cat who threatened his Clan.

Chapter 20

Falconpaw woke up from his dream, feeling more energized than ever. His blood was racing and his heart pounding his chest, the last time he felt like this was when he was in the battle. Something he had been longing for, Falconpaw stood up in his nest and glanced over at his denmates. Mudpaw was still sleeping, but Earthpaw was gone, she must have been on the dawn patrol. Falconpaw left the den, looking up at the sky. The early air was still crisp and cool, he took a deep breath, inhaling the scents of the forest. He began the walk back the camp, eager for his training today; whatever it may be.

In camp, SunClan was just getting up and about with their daily duties. As he walked further into camp, the dawn patrol returned. It was led by Cinderflame, with Adderstrike, Briarrose and as he guessed: Earthpaw and Heatherflight. Cinderflame's face seemed to hold a bit of annoyance, she dismissed her patrol then stalked over to Dawnstar's den. Her pawsteps were heavy and seemingly angry. Falconpaw's tail twitched in confusion, what had happened on the patrol that annoyed Cinderflame so much? He shrugged it off and began looking for Cherryleaf. He spotted her talking with Cloudspots and Yarrowtail as they laughed together.

Falconpaw padded over to her, making sure not to interrupt their conversation, he waited until Cherryleaf acknowledged him. "Oh, good, you're up Falconpaw. We're going on the next patrol with Lionclaw. It won't be until sun-high, but be ready to go."

Falconpaw lifted his head up. "Are we going to the AshClan border?" He questioned, wishing he could see an AshClan patrol, something he hadn't seen since the battle. Maybe even Cloverstrike or Nightpaw.

"Not this time," Cherryleaf replied. "The dawn patrol checked the AshClan border today, we're marking the MoonClan border." Falconpaw's spirit dropped a little, MoonClan wasn't nearly as interesting as AshClan, but at least he would be doing something

interesting. He turned away from his mentor, wondering how he would spend his time until sun-high when it was time to patrol. He caught movement out of the corner of his eye and looked towards Dawnstar's den. She emerged with Lionclaw and Cinderflame at her side. Each one of them wore the same annoyed look on their faces. Falconpaw watched in confusion as Dawnstar climbed the SunTree.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the SunTree for a Clan meeting!" It didn't take long for the majority of the Clan to gather. Falconpaw saw Sandfoot make her way to the SunTree and the group of kits try and shove their way out of the nursery. Pebblestep and Honeypaw poked their heads out of the medicine cat den, but didn't go far. Falconpaw moved closer, sitting beside Cherryleaf.

"What's going on?" Rainears questioned, there wasn't any planned ceremonies as far as Falconpaw was concerned. It wasn't time for Larkkit, Sorrelkit and Pikekit to become apprentices, was it?

"AshClan clearly did not learn their lesson." Dawnstar began, angered and surprised gasps broke out throughout the SunClan crowd. "They've been pushing their border farther and farther into our territory."

"Are we going to invade their territory?" Redclaw questioned. "Are we going to fight back?"

"Fighting back is a mouse-brained idea." Snowtail added. "Some wounds are still healing."

"Maybe it will teach them a lesson." Flamepetal growled from the back of the crowd. "They killed Bramblepelt, I think they need a re-teaching of the warrior code." Falconpaw was surprised to see Flamepetal's words so harsh, she was normally kind like her sister.

"There will be no battle with AshClan yet." Dawnstar mewed. "However, it is time for SunClan to take action against them. I will be gathering a patrol to go into AshClan's camp and demand to speak to Riverstar about her actions. If you would like to come with me, speak now."

"I want to go!" Flamepetal was the first to stand up and speak. Dawnstar shook her head slowly.

"I'm sorry, Flamepetal, but your judgement is still clouded by the loss of your father. It's understandable but this is a peaceful mission, it would be best if you stay here. The same goes for the rest of Bramblepelt's kits." Flamepetal sat down, lowering her head and lashing her tail.

"I'll go." Cloudspots mewed.

"Me too." Snowtail added. More and more cats started volunteering, and Falconpaw couldn't help but want to go as well.

"I want to go." Cherryleaf spoke up beside Falconpaw, he looked up at his mentor. "And I want Falconpaw to come." Falconpaw was surprised, had she sensed that he was eager to go? Falconpaw looked up at his mother, she knew that he and Honeypaw had spoken to each other, but did she trust him enough to go into AshClan territory?

After a moment of intense eye contact, Dawnstar nodded. "Very well. The patrol will consist of myself, Lionclaw, Cloudspots, Snowtail, Cherryleaf, Falconpaw, and Yarrowtail. We will be leaving shortly, so please prepare yourselves, and remember. We are not attacking, we are simply speaking to Riverstar. We will be in their camp, we would not stand a chance fighting them. The Clan meeting broke up and the cats on the patrol went to Dawnstar's side.

"Riverstar needs to understand that she cannot just do whatever she wants because she's leader, she's going to tear her Clan apart this way. We're going to tell her to stop what she's doing or SunClan will continue to fight back. She can't keep fighting forever." Dawnstar explained to them all."

"What if they don't listen to us and keep pushing to take territory? Are we going to risk losing another warrior?" Yarrowtail questioned. "Do they even know that they killed Bramblepelt?"

"They might not, Bramblepelt didn't die in battle." Dawnstar replied.

"Perhaps that will give them a wake-up call. Bramblepelt was a respected warrior throughout all the Clans."

"And if they attack us in camp?" Snowtail asked, concern lining mew. "What do we do then?"

"We retreat to our border, if they follow us then we fight back and get the rest of the Clan to help us." Dawnstar answered. "I don't think AshClan wants to kill, I think Riverstar's own insecurities are blinding her ability to lead. She came to SunClan for help when Thornstar overthrew AshClan. She, Silvermoon, Haresong and Lilyclaw stayed with us until we threw out Thornstar, none of them were at the battle and neither was Riverstar. She thinks that because we sheltered her that it makes her weak and she wants to prove to herself and to her Clan she's strong."

"Sounds to me that she's trying way too hard to be Echoheart." Lionclaw grumbled with a flick of his tail.

Echoheart? Falconpaw had never heard that name before, but the way Lionclaw said it; his voice dripped with animosity.

Dawnstar gave a small nod. "It seems like it, but I think she's trying hard *not* to be Echoheart." Lionclaw let out a snort. "Regardless, she needs to be stopped." Dawnstar rose from her sitting position. "We should leave now, before it gets too late." Dawnstar led her patrol out of the camp. Yarrowtail and Lionclaw were up by Dawnstar and the others filed in behind them. Falconpaw walked close to Cherryleaf, unsure what to think. He was going to another Clan's territory, feelings of excitement and danger raced through his veins. His claws were itching for a fight, but they weren't here to fight.

If AshClan were to engage a fight then they would have to run, but if Falconpaw started the fight he would get in trouble. They would also be incredibly outnumbered in AshClan's camp. Falconpaw knew the correct choice of action in this situation, but he didn't like it. However, starting an unnecessary fight was reckless. He would hold his claws until he needed them.

The patrol crossed through SunClan territory with minimal conversation, Falconpaw could hear small conversations between

Dawnstar, Lionclaw and Yarrowtail, but the rest of them were quiet. He could feel the tension and stress coming from his Clanmates, how many of them had been in AshClan territory? Falconpaw went to MoonClan camp when he was just a kit, but he had no memories of it. Falconpaw sniffed the air, the scent of AshClan growing stronger and closer, closer than it should be.

"This is where AshClan put their 'new' border." Dawnstar explained to her patrol. "We're going to go the old border and wait for a patrol to come. They need to know we're not here to attack." Falconpaw wanted to argue, but held his mouth shut. He stood impatiently beside his mentor, waiting for any AshClan cats to show up.

It felt like an eternity before Falconpaw heard the voices of strange cats show up, he stood up tall and waited for them to show up. The patrol neared and Falconpaw could see the figures of five cats in the distance. They grew closer and he could make out what they looked like. A gray tom was at the lead, following behind him was a dark gray tabby she-cat, a brown tom, a gray tabby she-cat and a light brown tom. He recognized some of the cats from the battle but not their names, his eyes focused on the light brown tom, that was the one who had been fighting Bramblepelt. *Are you responsible for his death?* Falconpaw narrowed his eyes.

"Dawnstar." The gray tom spoke with a bold voice and quickly approached the SunClan patrol. "What are you doing here?" Falconpaw couldn't help but notice he didn't say "on AshClan territory" despite them crossing the new border that AshClan had pushed.

"Stormheart,' Dawnstar dipped her head in respect. "We come in peace, but we need to talk to Riverstar."

"For what reason?" The light brown tom spoke up in the background, a hiss in his mew. Falconpaw narrowed his eyes at him.

"I'd think that would be obvious, Harewhisker." Dawnstar replied, keeping her voice steady. Harewhisker's let out a low growl.

"Why should we let you into our territory? This looks bigger than a

normal patrol." Stormheart said, his dark eyes scanning over the patrol.

"This big of a patrol is simply a precaution." Dawnstar replied. "We come in peace, I swear it on StarClan."

"We should let them talk to Riverstar, it's probably important." The gray tabby she-cat mewed, her voice seemed much kinder than the rest of her patrol.

"You would say that, Lilyclaw." Harewhisker growled, Lilyclaw looked over at him with a sharp look in her eyes.

"Now is not the time, Harewhisker." Lilyclaw didn't hiss or growl, her voice was calm yet stern. Harewhisker let out a snort but stopped his argument.

"Fine, Dawnstar. We'll escort your patrol to our camp, but any wrong steps and you'll find yourself in a lot of trouble." Stormheart mewed.

"Thank you, Stormheart." Dawnstar dipped her head and the SunClan crossed into AshClan territory. The AshClan patrol surrounded the SunClan patrol, and Falconpaw noticed that the brown tom was sticking close to him and giving him a dark glance. Falconpaw suddenly remembered as the cat who pulled Nightpaw away from him in the battle. Falconpaw did his best to ignore the tom and looked forward.

Everything felt wrong about AshClan's territory, the scent of AshClan was overwhelming and Falconpaw suddenly longed for the scent of his own Clan. The territory felt darker, as towering pine trees overshadowed them. Falconpaw could feel could feel pine needles dig into his paw pads, and he bit down the annoyance of it. How did AshClan live here? Falconpaw could barely see the sun through the tall trees. He felt trapped and blind in this dark forest.

In the distance, Falconpaw could see trees rising up in the distance, taller than any of the trees her had seen so far. The smaller trees started to clear out around them and the scent of AshClan grew even stronger. He could hear the sounds of conversation, they were

nearing the AshClan camp.

There was a large wall of boulders and an entrance made of twisting brambles. *That must be the entrance.* Falconpaw thought, it looked like a dangerous entrance. As they grew closer, Falconpaw could see that the opening was much larger than he originally thought. The cats of AshClan and the SunClan patrol made their way one by one into AshClan's camp. Falconpaw could feel thorns tug at his pelt but he pushed his way into the camp without injury.

AshClan's camp had a dark feeling to it, the towering wall of boulders, and the overwhelming scent of AshClan. The trees so high above the, it made Falconpaw feel as small as a mouse. The moment the SunClan cats stepped into the AshClan camp, all conversation came to a halt. Falconpaw could feel the eyes of every AshClan cat resting on him and the rest of the patrol, but Falconpaw refused to show his intimidation.

Falconpaw studied AshClan's camp, trying to determine which den was where. There was large pile of boulders near the back of the camp with a dark opening, he assumed that was Riverstar's den. Not far from that den was a bush, reinforced with thick brambles. He noticed a black cat poking his head out of the den, Falconpaw recognized him as the medicine cat apprentice, so he assumed that was the medicine cat den.

Closer to the entrance of camp was a den made of a yew bush, once again reinforced by thick, twisting brambles. Inside were regular warriors, marking it as the warrior's den. He looked towards the warrior's den, not far was a thick pine tree with a hollowed-out center. Apprentice den perhaps? Finally, there were two more dens. There was a fallen pine tree over a bramble enforced holly bush, and next to it was a smaller rock formation. One of those was the elder's den, and the other the nursery.

The cats of AshClan had stopped what they were doing to watch the SunClan cats, some giving incredibly hostile glares. Falconpaw's eyes rested on Cloverstrike, sitting with a dark gray tabby she-cat. Cloverstrike's green eyes bled hatred towards the SunClan cats, Falconpaw ignored her glares.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" Riverstar's voice was demanding, and powerful. The AshClan leader stepped out of her den, head held high and blue eyes sparking with annoyance. Falconpaw had only seen Riverstar at the gathering, she was much more intimidating up close. However, Dawnstar stood just as high as her with the same fierceness pulsing out from her pelt.

"I wish to speak with you, Riverstar. Whether it be in front of your entire Clan or in private, that's your choice." Dawnstar replied, her voice bold and steady.

"Whatever you have to say;" Riverstar looked around at her Clan. "All of AshClan can hear it."

"Very well," Dawnstar took a step closer to the AshClan leader. "Even after losing the battle, AshClan continues to press the borders. I say this now, in front of every cat who is willing to hear my words. If you do not stop this, then more unnecessary blood will have to be spilled."

"You dare come into my camp and tell me what I should do? I will contest that border as much as I want!" Riverstar argued, only inches from Dawnstar's face; Dawnstar bared her teeth.

"You hide from the battle you started like a coward, a battle which cost the lives of one of my warriors!" There were quiet gasps that came from AshClan. "Bramblepelt died because of your ignorance, Riverstar. You didn't even have the nerve to show your face in the battle. You're no better than Thornstar or Echoheart, your fear is driving your actions and soon it's going to cost you your own warriors, but I will not idly stand by and let it cost me my warriors." Dawnstar raised her voice, it echoed throughout AshClan's camp.

"If you do not replace your own border, and if any AshClan warrior crosses that border, they will answer to me and my warriors." She looked around the AshClan warriors. "Cats of AshClan, you just escaped a tyrannical leader, do you really want to deal with another one?"

"Leave my territory, Dawnstar!" Riverstar spat. "Or you will be

chased out! Do not cross that border again!"

"And you better not cross ours!" Dawnstar shouted in return. "SunClan will not hold back if you challenge us!"

"Leave! Now!" Riverstar's voice was nearing dangerous, her claws were out and her teeth bared in threat. Dawnstar turned away from the AshClan leader with a lash of her tail.

"SunClan, it's time we leave." Dawnstar spoke. "We have delivered our message. Whether AshClan listens or not—is their choice."

"Stormheart," Riverstar spat. "Escort SunClan back to their own territory." Stormheart dipped his head and joined with the SunClan patrol.

Dawnstar stepped confidently out of AshClan's camp, her warriors following close. Falconpaw looked over his shoulder once before following his Clan out of AshClan's camp. They pushed their way through the thorn entrance, Falconpaw could feel their claw-sharp gazes digging into his back. Falconpaw ignored AshClan's hateful glances, and kept walking through AshClan territory.

"I hope you don't think that SunClan was threatening AshClan, Stormheart." Dawnstar said with a semi-serious tone to her voice.

"What I think doesn't matter right now, Dawnstar." Stormheart replied, his voice low. "I respect you, Dawnstar, but I follow my leader."

"Understandable." Dawnstar dipped her head, then let out a small sigh. Her mew was mildly unnerving to Falconpaw. "I suppose that peace was just a dream, and it's time to wake up."

Chapter 21

Honeypaw discarded the herb scraps before taking another look at Snakewhisker's leg. It was still broken, but Pebblestep told her it was healing. The medicine den had cleared out, leaving only the medicine cats and Snakewhisker once again. It was quiet and Honeypaw enjoyed it. She was finally able to sleep peacefully again, her fight with Falconpaw had left her distressed and confused, and Bramblepelt's death made it even worse for her.

However, after speaking with her mother and her brother afterwards; she finally felt better. She had finally patched issues up with Falconpaw, and her confidence in her medicine cat skills were starting to return as well. She changed Snakewhisker's herb dressings with confidence and could easily treat the wounded cats when they still stayed with her.

Now, there wasn't much for her to do other than treat Snakewhisker, she was done twice a day and not always by her. Right now, her medicine cat duties remained gathering herbs and moss, but she wasn't complaining. She knew that Dawnstar had gone to talk to Riverstar in their camp, but she didn't know how everything would play out. Honeypaw really didn't want another battle. She didn't want to risk losing another SunClan warrior, it was a hard situation to deal with.

Snakewhisker stretched out in his nest, looking up at Honeypaw. "So, how are things between you and Falconpaw?" He questioned. "I know you talked it out, but is he staying nice?"

Honeypaw sat down, resting her tail over her paws. "We haven't really had a chance to talk since then, he's been busy and so have I." She looked out the entrance of the medicine cat den. "But I think we're still okay."

"That's good, then." Snakewhisker replied. "Do you think he meant his apology?" Honeypaw looked back at Snakewhisker with a bit of confusion.

"What do you mean? Do you think he lied?" She inquired. "Why would he lie about apologizing."

"Well, you said that your mother talked to him before that." Snakewhisker blinked. "I just don't want him to only have apologized because Dawnstar made him, I want him to have meant it."

Honeypaw thought for a moment, Dawnstar must have talked to him. Which encouraged him to apologize, but was it really a fake apology? She thought back to when Falconpaw did apologize, his words had seemed sincere. "I don't think he was lying, I think it was a genuine apology. I could tell, I just think he's busy."

Snakewhisker nodded, his green eyes soft. "That's good, I hope he keeps it up. From what I hear, he's a good fighter, but let's hope he's a good brother." Snakewhisker rested his chin on his paws. "You two should try and spend some together soon."

Honeypaw let out a purr. "I'll try my best, maybe we'll share some prey after he's done with training."

"Sounds like a plan." Snakewhisker yawned. "Now, if you excuse me I'm going to take a nap. Those poppy seeds are kicking in."

"Alright, Snakewhisker." Honeypaw nodded kindly. "I'll find some way to keep my paws busy."

Snakewhisker curled the best he could into his nest, closing his eyes. Honeypaw stood up and padded out of the medicine cat den, allowing him some time to fall asleep. As she exited she noticed Falconpaw with his head low and an annoyed look in his eyes. Honeypaw padded up to him.

"Everything okay?" She questioned as she got closer to her brother. Falconpaw looked up, there was a hint of annoyance in his amber eyes for a split second before he looked away.

"I guess, Cherryleaf is making me gather moss today." He semi-growled. "Not something I want to be doing."

Honeypaw hid an amused purr. "Well, if you want I could go with

you, the medicine den could use some new moss." Falconpaw looked at her, he seemed to contemplate saying yes or not, but eventually nodded his head.

"Not sure how we could make this any fun, but yeah you can come." With that, the two littermates began their walk out of camp. There wasn't much conversation between the two of them as they made their way to the moss hollow. Honeypaw felt a slight twinge of awkwardness between them, but tried her best to ignore it. They padded down into the moss hollow where they sat by the walls. "I hate doing this so much." Falconpaw said as he began clawing down patches of moss. "I don't see how it's beneficial to apprentice training."

Honeypaw looked at him, clawing down her own ball of moss. "It's beneficial to me because I'll be doing this even when I'm a full medicine cat, but maybe for warrior apprentices it's to build patience and discipline?"

Falconpaw snorted. "I have to build enough patience training alongside, Mudpaw." He let out a quiet chuckle. "That furball is just as arrogant as I am, he just doesn't want to admit it.

Honeypaw couldn't help but laugh. "At least you know you're arrogant." She shot a playful look at Falconpaw.

Falconpaw looked back, his eyes sparking playfully as well. "I know I am, but I also know I am a good fighter, everyone told me so after the battle."

"I heard that as well," Honeypaw replied, looking back at her task. "How'd you get so good? Cherryleaf must be a good mentor."

"Yeah, she's a good mentor." Falconpaw's voice trailed off slightly, then he looked at Honeypaw. "You've been the moonstone, right? You went a while back."

Honeypaw nodded, wondering why he was changing the subject to her going to the moonstone. "Yeah, I went at the half-moon, why?"

"Did you meet a StarClan warrior?" Falconpaw's eyes turned back to

the moss, he seemed to be forcing them to stay there.

"We're not supposed to talk about it, but I did meet a StarClan warrior." She tilted her head at Falconpaw. Why was he suddenly so interested?

"I've met one too." Falconpaw said, his voice quiet. "He's been training me how to fight in my dreams."

Honeypaw's eyes widened. "Really? Who were they?" She questioned, why had a StarClan warrior came to Falconpaw? And they were training him?

"I-I don't know his name." Falconpaw's claws scraped at the stone floor of the hollow. "He's just been training me. He says he wants to make me a great warrior." Honeypaw stared at Falconpaw, she didn't know what; but it felt like Falconpaw was lying about something. She didn't think he would lie to her about meeting a StarClan warrior, but what was he lying about?

"That's incredible, Falconpaw." She mewed, her tone filled with awe. "Is that why you were limping that day?"

Falconpaw gave a stiff nod. "Yeah, that's also how I got this nick in my ear. Training accident."

"I didn't know that could happen, wounds in your dreams? That's insane." Honeypaw thought about her own dreams, they were never filled with fighting and the only time she had ever seen a StarClan cat was when she went to the half-moon and met Honeywing. Could you really get wounded in a dream and have them carry over into the real world?

"Just," Falconpaw's body was stiff. "Don't tell anyone, okay? I don't want others to know right now."

Honeypaw looked at her paws, she wasn't sure how she felt about not being able to tell anyone about his dreams, but they were *his* dreams after all. "I won't tell anyone, I promise." Going from not talking to Falconpaw telling Honeypaw a secret was a big step for them, she was grateful to have her brother back.

"Thanks, Honeypaw." Falconpaw continued gathering moss at his paws, and after a moment; Honeypaw did the same. They sat in silence for the rest of their time in the hollow, until they both figured they had collected enough moss. "We should head back to camp." He mewed, looking at his collection of moss. Honeypaw agreed and they each gathering up their moss and began walking back to camp.

Now they actually couldn't talk, as they each had a mouthful of moss. Honeypaw looked at her brother as they walked to camp, his amber eyes were focused forward and he moved with confidence. Part of her wished she had the kind of confidence that he had, that she could carry herself with bravery and poise. She just didn't have it, she wondered if she ever would. She knew there could be a difference between confidence and arrogance, though it may be a small difference. Too much confidence could lead to arrogance, something Falconpaw definitely had.

However, his confidence seemed to help him in several ways. He was an incredible fighter and she assumed hunter as well. Whichever StarClan cat was training him, they were clearly a good fighter. Honeypaw felt a stab of worry, she didn't want her brother getting hurt by some strange StarClan cat who wouldn't even tell Falconpaw his name. Surely StarClan cats could be trusted? They were once warriors too and they served their time properly in their Clans.

Then she wondered what Clan this cat was originally from, in StarClan they didn't have borders. This cat could've been from any one of the four Clans, whether it been SunClan, AshClan, MoonClan or LichenClan. She hoped the warrior was from SunClan, she would find him a bit more trust worthy that way.

Honeypaw's thoughts were stopped as they reached camp. Falconpaw motioned that he was taking the moss to the elder's den and he padded away. Honeypaw watched him go before going back to her own den. She enjoyed spending time with Falconpaw, but it had left her with many thoughts, both ones that made her happy and ones that made her nervous.

Inside the medicine cat den, Snakewhisker was sound asleep and

Pebblestep hadn't returned from collect herbs just yet. Honeypaw quietly padded through the den, trying her best not to wake Snakewhisker and sat down next to the moss pile where she began forming balls of moss for future use. She also added some more moss to Pebblestep as a small gift, she would give some to Snakewhisker when he woke up. Honeypaw now needed another task to keep herself busy, so she decided to sort through the herb store again.

She got rid of the dying herbs, set some leaves out to dry and organizing them neatly inside the store. That task too her a while, so when she was finished and the moon was starting to rise outside of the den; she decided to get some sleep for the night. She would see Pebblestep in the morning, Honeypaw had stopped thinking about Falconpaw and his StarClan mentor, and fell into a deep sleep after only a few moments.

Honeypaw opened to her eyes to see a sky full of stars. She stood up and looked around in confused, she was no longer in the medicine cat den but a strange field. However, this field felt familiar, and somehow safe and welcoming. Honeypaw tried to remember where she had seen this place before, but then a soft, comforting voice spoke.

"It's good to see you, Honeypaw." Honeypaw turned and saw Honeywing standing a few tail lengths away from her, her green eyes glowing softly.

"Honeywing!" She exclaimed and bounded over the StarClan she-cat. "I can't believe it's you!"

Honeywing let out a purr. "Well I'm here." She brushed her tail along Honeypaw's pelt, Honeypaw felt relaxed and calm. A moment later, Honeywing's expression changed, it shifted from happy and soothing, to somewhat sad and nervous. "Unfortunately, I didn't just come to say hello."

Honeypaw's ears flattened slightly. "What's wrong? Did I do something wrong? Shouldn't you be telling Pebblestep or Dawnstar?"

"I'm telling you for a reason, Honeypaw." Honeywing replied. "That reason will become clear later. "However, there is a rising threat in the forest. The Clans will not see it coming, be in the look for any dangers or threats hiding where you cannot see them."

Honeypaw felt unease crawl through her skin, she looked at Honeywing with urgency. "What does that mean? What is the danger?"

"That's all I know, Honeypaw." Honeywing lowered her head. "There is also another thing I want to tell you about."

Honeypaw tilted her head slightly. "What is it?" She questioned. Honeywing looked back up, her green eyes filled with concern.

"I'm worried about your brother." She mewed.

"My brother?" Honeypaw's mind flashed to Falconpaw, he was probably having a dream with his StarClan mentor right now. "What about him?"

"I'm worried that..." Honeywing looked around. "I'm worried that your brother is going down a dark path, that warrior he told you about...he is not a StarClan warrior."

Honeypaw stepped back slightly. "He's not a StarClan warrior? Then what is he?"

"I don't know, that's what upsetting me. I don't know who he is, or what he wants with Falconpaw but he's not a StarClan warrior. Your brother should not be visiting him, he's making a— "

"Honeywing!" Honeypaw and Honeywing both jumped at the sound of a very angry yowl. They both turned around and Honeypaw saw a cat she had never seen before. It was a she-cat with pale ginger fur and black spots, from the stars glittering in her pelt; Honeypaw knew she was a StarClan cat. "You said you were going to warn her about the danger in the forest, not her brother."

"Poppyfur..." Honeywing let out a slight groan. "She needs to know that her brother is in danger."

Danger? Honeypaw tensed, she also recognized Poppyfur's name, she was Pebblestep's mentor, the former SunClan medicine cat.

"We don't know that Falconpaw is in any immediate danger, you think he's making a bad choice but we clearly said that we weren't going to get involved in their lives like this." Poppyfur growled at Honeywing. Honeywing looked at her paws for a moment, then at Honeypaw.

"I'm sorry, Honeypaw." Honeywing looked back at Poppyfur. "Well, she knows now. There's nothing wrong with Honeypaw being on the lookout for danger with her brother."

Poppyfur sighed, then stepped in beside Honeywing. "Honeypaw, look for danger in the forest, you can tell Pebblestep or Dawnstar about this if so chose, but I promise you that your brother is fine, you can trust me."

Chapter 22

Falconpaw ducked away from Mudpaw, dodging his paws with ease. Falconpaw recoiled, his paws hitting Mudpaw directly in the side. The brown apprentice let out a sharp breath and stumbled away, facing Falconpaw with a spark of annoyance in his green eyes. Mudpaw attacked once more, with Falconpaw dodging easily. Falconpaw was about the same size as Mudpaw, but Mudpaw did have a bit of weight on him. Falconpaw was able to use this against Mudpaw, hitting him in the back of his hind legs and causing his legs to buckle under him. Mudpaw hit the ground and Falconpaw jumped on him, pinning Mudpaw down with all his force.

"Very good, Falconpaw." Cherryleaf praised, and Falconpaw released the other apprentice. "I swear, you improve each and every night." Falconpaw held his head high, feeling incredibly confident and powerful. He *was* improving every night, fighting Falconclaw kept his skills sharp and constantly on point. Fighting Mudpaw wasn't even a challenge compared to his strong mentor. It was a struggle for Falconpaw at some points, training with Falconclaw was a lot more intense.

They fought with claws out, and sometimes Falconpaw felt like he was fighting for his life as Falconclaw would pin him down, claws digging into his skin and even reaching for his throat. Falconpaw had to hold back a lot of his strength on Mudpaw but still would attack too hard at some points, he could tell from how Mudpaw was walking that the blow to his side had been rather painful. Mudpaw sat beside Earthpaw with a slight wince.

"It's my turn to fight him." Earthpaw said while standing up, her green eyes flashing with determination. Falconpaw met her gaze, maybe Earthpaw would actually be a challenging fight.

"Very well," Heatherflight gave a nod. Earthpaw took her brother's place where he had been fighting, she opened her mouth to speak but Falconpaw didn't give her a chance. He tackled her to the ground, where she landed in a flurry of dust. Earthpaw twisted out

of Falconpaw's grip and spun around on her paws to face him. She was clearly much faster than Mudpaw, she was slim and quick.

Earthpaw moved in to attack, Falconpaw turned away from her paws; avoiding her hits. Falconpaw moved quickly to trip her up, but Earthpaw was fast. Falconpaw missed her legs, and instead swiped at empty air. Earthpaw pounced forward, her paws hitting Falconpaw directly in the chest and knocking him backwards. Falconpaw lost his balance and fell to the ground with a huff. He stood up quickly, anger sparking inside him, he jumped forward with full force crashing directly into Earthpaw and knocking her to the ground, pinning her.

"Ow!" Earthpaw hissed. "What's your deal?" Her voice tore Falconpaw of out of his strange trance, his eyes focused on Earthpaw. Blood was welling from a long scratch on her shoulder. Falconpaw jumped off of her as the mentors and Mudpaw surrounded Earthpaw.

"I'm so sorry," Falconpaw apologized. "I-I didn't mean to." He looked at Earthpaw who licking her wound and Mudpaw who was glaring at him with enough hatred to kill.

"What's your problem, Falconpaw?" He growled. "We're just training and you attack with claws?"

"It was an accident!" Falconpaw argued, stepping back. "I didn't mean to, I promise." He looked down, ashamed in hurting his own Clanmate.

"It's not a deep wound, just a scratch." Heatherflight confirmed. "She'll be okay, it's not the end of the world."

Earthpaw stood up, looking at the scratch. She didn't seem to be in too much pain, but guilt still clawed at Falconpaw. "Why don't you all head back to camp," Cherryleaf suggested. "I'm going to talk to Falconpaw."

"I hope you talk some sense into the mouse-brain." Mudpaw growled and turned away to stand by his sister.

Falconpaw sat down, keeping his head low. "I didn't mean to scratch her, It was an accident."

"I know it was an accident, Falconpaw." Cherryleaf sat beside him. "I know that you would never intentionally hurt a Clanmate, the issue is that you have no self-control." Falconpaw looked up at her, confusion swelling inside him.

"I have no self-control?" He questioned.

"When it comes to battle you are a fierce warrior and you fight to win, which is a great thing. You fight to defend your Clan, which is what a warrior should be. However, you seem to have forgotten the difference between training and battling. I want you to give training your all, but you need to remember you're in training and in no real danger." Falconpaw flattened his ears. When he trained with Falconclaw, he was in danger. "Part of this also stems from your inability to control your anger, I could see it in your eyes when Earthpaw knocked you down."

"I-I didn't mean to." Falconpaw shuffled his paws, not knowing what else to say at this point.

"I understand that." Cherryleaf let out a soft sigh. "For a while, maybe we should stick to solo training. Just you and I?"

Falconpaw looked up at his mentor. "Forever?" Solo training was enjoyable, but he enjoyed testing his strengths against other cats. Not just Cherryleaf, but other apprentices.

"No, not forever. Just for a while, maybe we can learn on calming that anger of yours." Cherryleaf stood up, looking up at the sky with gentle green eyes. "Let's head back to camp, I'm sure the rest of them are already there."

Falconpaw nodded, not adding of his own thoughts to the conversation. He didn't feel like facing the rest of the Clan, he was more than positive that Mudpaw would be making him out to be some savage cat. Which simply wasn't true, he would never hurt a Clanmate on purpose. He just hoped the rest of the Clan knew it.

Cherryleaf and Falconpaw crossed through the forest without speaking, every so often Cherryleaf would say something about prey or the seasons changing but Falconpaw didn't respond. He didn't feel like responding, or talking at all with his mentor. They reached the camp's entrance and sure enough, Mudpaw was with his sister at the medicine cat den, his green eyes glowed with rage as he spoke to Pebblestep and Honeypaw.

Honeypaw looked concerned, with a hint of confusion. Pebblestep just shook her head slightly and Earthpaw looked annoyed. Falconpaw approached them, readying himself for a heartfelt apology towards Earthpaw, but her wound didn't look that deep at all. There wasn't even cobwebs on it.

"Mudpaw, would you calm down?" Earthpaw mewed with anger and annoyance underlying her mew. "It's not that big of a deal, it doesn't even hurt."

"He still hurt you, Earthpaw. He should--" Mudpaw cut himself off when he saw Falconpaw, his eyes burning hotter than the sun at sunhigh. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to apologize to Earthpaw," He turned away from Mudpaw's angry gaze and focused on Earthpaw. "I'm really sorry that I scratched you, I didn't mean to. It was a complete accident." Falconpaw lowered his head, wishing she would accept his apology.

"It's fine, you mousebrain." Earthpaw chuckled. "I know it was an accident, it's not like you bit my ear off. It's just a scratch."

"Earthpaw is right." Pebblestep spoke up. "I've seen worse damage from thorns." She rested her blue eyes playfully on Falconpaw, motioning to his ear. Falconpaw flattened his ears and looked down in embarrassment.

"You were just really into the training." Earthpaw shrugged. "Could've happened to any cat." Falconpaw looked up at his kin with a feeling of thankfulness washing over him. He was lucky that Earthpaw was such a laid-back cat. If he had actually clawed Mudpaw, he would of acted like he was dying. "I will say though," Earthpaw said, standing up. "It was a pretty good fight." Falconpaw

chuckled, feeling better about the whole situation. I twas a good fight, Earthpaw was well trained. She was able to knock him down, and she was a tough she-cat. Earthpaw glanced over at the two medicine cats. "Am I free to go?"

Pebblestep nodded. "Yes, your wound will be healed up in a couple days. Like I said, it's not much of a wound at all."

"Thank you!" Earthpaw purred and padded away, her brother following with his head down and low grumbles.

"So what happened to make you scratch her like that?" Honeypaw asked, but with laughter in her voice.

"Training got a little too intense, she's a good fighter." Falconpaw replied, looking back at his sister. Pebblestep had retreated into her den, leaving the two of them alone. There was something in Honeypaw's eyes, something deep in the green depths. Falconpaw couldn't tell what it was, but he knew he didn't like. "I-I gotta go." Falconpaw mewed, turning away from Honeypaw. "I'll talk to you later." He turned away before Honeypaw could reply, he couldn't tell what that look in her eyes was. He just knew that it made him feel uncomfortable and he wanted to be somewhere else.

Falconpaw let out a groan of boredom as he lay in the apprentice den by himself. Outside, the sun was slowly falling into night and he hadn't done anything since training. He was incredibly bored, but Cherryleaf told him that there would be no more training for the day. Falconpaw's claws itched to be doing something, anything! Falconpaw looked out the apprentice den, it was nearly nighttime. Earthpaw and Mudpaw would be showing up soon and turning in for the night.

Falconpaw stood up, getting out of his nest and making his way to the exit. He poked his head out and looked around for his denmates. There was no sign of either of them, or any cat for that matter. The sky was orange and the sun slipping behind the trees, there was still time to be out and about.

Falconpaw quickly walked away from the apprentice den, getting out of sight of the camp's exit. He was an apprentice now, he was

allowed to freely roam the territory as long as he wasn't getting into trouble, and he wouldn't get into any trouble. Falconpaw had never explored the territory past Jagged Rocks, and he wanted to. The closest he had ever even been to Jagged Rocks was when he was a kit, but he was smarter now. He wouldn't go near Jagged Rocks, but he would go past them.

Falconpaw walked through the forest, not wanting to rush his journey. He wouldn't be missed, considering Earthpaw and Mudpaw normally went straight to bed upon reaching the den. As long as he returned before sun came up, he would be okay. He thought about Falconclaw, he would probably be missing some training but he was sure that Falconclaw wouldn't mind, he was exploring his own territory, something he should've done a long time ago.

Falconpaw walked as the forest began to thin out and eventually evened into a field. He walked forward into the field, Jagged Rocks rising up in the horizon like broken claws. He knew that adders wouldn't be around as much during the night, but he still avoided getting close and watched the ground for any sneaking adders. He walked quietly and with caution as he neared Jagged Rocks. He was on level with Jagged Rocks, but still a safe enough distance away.

He looked at the rock formation, it was certainly large. He remembered the story of when AshClan attacked a group of apprentices, including his parents at Jagged Rocks. He wondered why AshClan would attack, maybe because Jagged Rocks was so close to the border? He shrugged it off and kept walking.

The sky was dark now, the moon taking its place in the sky, but not quite moonhigh yet. Falconpaw walked through the now unfamiliar section of SunClan territory. He knew it was still SunClan territory by the scent that continued to surround him. He continued walking, wondering if this wasn't just a waste of time, but he wanted to see where SunClan's territory ended.

That's when he saw something up rising in the distance, it was tall and foreign. It didn't look like anything from the forest. Curiosity picking at him, Falconpaw continued walking, wanting to learn what this mysterious thing was. He noticed as he grew closer that SunClan's began to slowly fade until he was nothing but a slight

trace. He was no longer in SunClan territory, he looked around for any danger.

He couldn't scent any other cats, or anything that seemed dangerous. It just smelled like grass. Falconpaw pushed himself to go farther, he didn't feel any immediate danger to himself. The mysterious rose up even higher until Falconpaw found himself only a few taillengths from the structure. It was high, not as high as a tree but still loomed over him. Falconpaw dared to step closer. The wall was made of a hard, silvery mesh. Almost like cobweb, but thicker and harder. Falconpaw pressed his paw against the mesh, it was cold and hard to the touch. Falconpaw drew his paw back as a horrible scent wafted in around him.

Falconpaw peered through the holes in the mesh to see a smooth, dark black stone surface. Falconpaw's curiosity bit into him, he knew he shouldn't venture to it but he couldn't help himself. Falconpaw looked along the mesh wall, looking for a place to maybe climb but it was entirely too tall. A few taillengths away, Falconpaw noticed a hole in the mesh, just big enough for him to squeeze through.

Falconpaw padded over to the hole and crouched down to force his way through it. He could feel the sharp mesh dig into his pelt like claws, but he didn't feel it break into his skin. When Falconpaw was on the other side, the foul scent grew stronger. He placed a paw on the black surface, it was hard like stone. Falconpaw peered over the path, trying to see what was on the other side. He could see lights in the distance, almost like large stars.

Falconpaw looked over his shoulder, no cats had followed him and it still wasn't moonhigh. He saw no reason why he couldn't venture farther, he would stay out of danger. Falconpaw stepped onto the the path cautiously. Not knowing what it was or why it was here. Falconpaw walked slowly across the path, looking around. As he crossed he could see something coming up from his side.

He saw two bright, glowing orbs coming at him incredibly fast. Fear shot through Falconpaw's body and he sprinted to the other side of the path. He stumbled to a stop at the other side as something he had never seen blazed past him. Falconpaw hid behind a bush,

hoping that whatever that creature was wouldn't stalk him. It was bigger than anything he had ever seen before. Falconpaw's heart was racing inside his chest, he had to take heavy breaths.

When he was sure the creature wouldn't follow him, and his heartbeat had slowed down enough, Falconpaw continued walking. So many strange scents wafted in around him, some smelled like cat but most were completely unfamiliar to him. Something was digging inside Falconpaw, something that told him to turn back and go home but he kept on pushing forward. Falconpaw wasn't a coward.

Falconpaw stuck to the shadows, not knowing what was lurking in the distance in this strange new territory. Eventually the grass was cut off by another mess wall, but this one had a large hole, big enough for him to simply walk through. When he stepped through he was met by looming dens and cold stone. Taking a deep breath, Falconpaw stepped into the dark area. He could smell crowfood, wet stone and many other strange things.

Falconpaw looked over his shoulder and found that the mesh wall was no longer in sight, wherever he was he had gone a long way. Falconpaw figured it may be time to turn around and go home, he shouldn't be here any longer and it was getting later. Falconpaw turned and began follow his own scent back to the forest.

"You're a long way from home, kittypet." Falconpaw stopped frozen his tracks, as a chilling voice spoke from the shadows. He turned to see a thin, dirty she-cat lurking out from the shadows. She was a gray tabby with white paws, and her dark, murky green eyes shimmering in the moonlight. "I don't see a lot of kittypets around here, I thought you were all smarter than that."

Falconpaw faced the she-cat, stepping backwards and trying not to show fear. "I-I'm not a kittypet." He couldn't control the trembling in his voice. Something about this she-cat sent chills deep into his bloodstream.

"Oh? What are you then?" The she-cat began circling around him, he couldn't help but notice that she had her claws fully extended as they clicked against the cold stone beneath their paws. She stepped

closer, giving Falconpaw a sniff. "You smell like the forest, are you a little warrior kit?"

"I'm an apprentice!" Falconpaw couldn't help but snap at the she-cat, her eyes sparked and she stepped closer.

"An apprentice? You're rather far from your Clan. Something tells me..." The she-cat was so close he could feel her hot breath on his pelt. "That you're from SunClan." Falconpaw tensed, trying to avoid her gaze completely. "What's your name, little apprentice?"

Falconpaw took a deep breath, not wanting to cause any trouble with this strange she-cat. "Falconpaw, my name is Falconpaw."

The she-cat stopped, she was not longer looking at Falconpaw. "Falconpaw, huh?" She turned back around, her green eyes glowing dangerously in the moonlight. "You must be Dawnstar's little kit." Her tone of voice made the fur on Falconpaw's spin rise, he stood firmly where he was.

"How do you know who my mother is? Who are you?" Falconpaw questioned, forcing himself to meet her dangerous gaze.

"My name is Echoheart, and your mother took *everything* from me." Echoheart snarled, she formed herself into a battle stance. Falconpaw took a step back, feeling an immediate danger pressing on his chest. "She took my Clan, my kits, and the love of my life." Falconpaw continued to step back, Echoheart was looking at him like he was a piece of fresh-kill. "It would only be fair," Echoheart crouched. "If I took something from her."

Falconpaw didn't have any time to react as Echoheart jumped on him, pushing him to the ground. Echoheart was thin but she had the training of a fully grown warrior. Falconpaw struggled underneath her grip, claws digging into his pelt. Falconpaw couldn't get away from her, for a moment it felt as if he was fighting Falconclaw, but she wasn't his mentor. If Echoheart lived out here, then she must be outside the warrior code. Echoheart was fighting to kill, and Falconpaw needed to get away from her.

Falconpaw dug his own claws into Echoheart's side and raked them

down her pelt, she hissed with fury and slightly lessened her grip on Falconpaw. He used this moment to shove his hind paws deep into her stomach. Echoheart let out a pained gasp and fell off of Falconpaw. He scrambled to his paws. He didn't waste any time looking at Echoheart, and took off in a dead sprint.

Falconpaw followed his scent in a panic, looking for the silver mesh in the distance. He slipped through the hole in the mesh and darted through the short grass to the the strange stone path. He could feel Echoheart's paws thrumming behind him, but he didn't look over his shoulder.

Falconpaw neared the stone path, and took a deep breath. Not slowing down for even a second as his paws pounded across the hard, stone path. None of the strange monsters showed up as he crossed. He skidded to a stop so he could squeeze through the hole in the other mesh, he moved to fast and he felt the mesh cut into his fur. He bit back the pain and broke through to the other side.

"Run all you want, little apprentice. I will find you, again!" Falconpaw could hear Echoheart shout in the distance, and he broke into a sprint again not stopping until he was safely back into SunClan territory. When Falconpaw finally stopped, he nearly collapsed. His lungs were burning and his entire body ached from the run, he had never run so much in his life before.

Falconpaw sat down in the field, panting heavily and struggling to catch his breath. He looked around, there was no sign of Echoheart. *Sounds to me that she's trying way too hard to be Echoheart.*

Lionclaw's words echoed in Falconpaw's mind, he didn't know who Echoheart was other than that she was a former AshClan cat and Riverstar had some connection to her. Falconpaw stood up, his body aching. He had to take a moment to clean the wounds that Echoheart left so that his Clanmates wouldn't questioned why he was covered in scratches.

Falconpaw walked slowly back to the apprentice den, the night was almost over and he could only hope that Cherryleaf would let him sleep in, but Falconpaw couldn't tell anyone about what had happened with Echoheart. He dropped his head as he neared the

apprentice den, Earthpaw and Mudpaw were both already asleep and Falconpaw fell into his nest. He couldn't fall asleep, his mind kept wandering to Echoheart. *Your mother took everything from me.* Her words pounded away in Falconpaw's mind, bringing him a headache along with it. *She took my Clan, my kits, and the love of my life.* Who were Echoheart's kits? Who was her mate?

Questions swarmed his mind, and Falconpaw couldn't help but feel that something much worse would come of Echoheart.

Special Thanks

Hey all! If you've read the entirety of *Sun Awakening* I just wanna say thanks! I put a lot of effort in to my books and it means a lot for those read them. This book is only the first in a six book series titled *A New Horizon.* The rest of the series will follow the story of Honeypaw and Falconpaw as they grow up and try and uncover their destinies within SunClan.

If you haven't read *Dawnstar's Trouble*, I highly suggest you do as that book takes place before this one!

Anyway, thank you again for reading my book and I hope you come back for more!

Keep watch for:
Flowerstar's Judgement
A New Horizon: The Dying Forest